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THE ADULT LEARNER

Journal of the Adult Education Organisers' Association

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Editorial Comment

It is a policy of the **Adult Learner** to attempt to deal with issues that are topical and relevant to adult education and so, in this edition, we have contributions on the Green Paper, "Partners in Education", on the subject of Distance Learning, on the phenomenal growth of writing groups throughout the country and on Active Retirement.

However, it must be said, that we have little or no difficulty, even in an annual publication, of keeping abreast of developments in adult education at the level of authority and decision-making. What we are now witnessing is a plethora of initiatives, schemes and projects being developed at local level and, while this is heartening in many respects, yet, as the recent AONTAS survey demonstrates, there is now much need of rationalisation and co-ordination. We have many groups working in a vacuum and often in ignorance of parallel developments in other areas. We have much to learn from each other and we are all in need of guidance and direction. So far there is little evidence of this kind of support forthcoming as we await the Great Awakening on high.

While we wait, we carry on and in this second edition of our journal, you will find a representative sample of what is happening and some new thinking on Adult and Community education to-day. Most of all, we hope that you may be provoked into responding in writing. We welcome reaction, as even negative reaction shows that you have paid us the best tribute possible – you have read the articles. If you are moved to writing a letter, or better still an article, please forward it to me at the address below.

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Anyone for Writing?

SUE RICHARDSON

One of the most dynamic developments in the cultural side of Irish life over the past four to five years has been the mushrooming of local writing groups. Though each group is completely independent, taken as a whole they form the nucleus of a new and exciting movement, important on many levels besides the creative.

BELONGING TO A GROUP

Writing groups come in widely divergent shapes and forms – perhaps almost as wide as the mix of individuals within them. Everyone who joins has a basic commitment to writing, but the fringe benefits they generate – friendships, exchanges of views, expanded horizons and a general growth of confidence, enthusiasm and strength are important too. These ‘fringe benefits’ are similar to those described by adult learners in the last issue of this magazine and, in my opinion, are as important as the actual creative activities. One reason for this lies in the spin-off effects within the geographical areas in which the groups exist. The more people around with expanding fields of interest generated by one type of activity, (writing in this case), the more people there are involved in other types of community activities and adult education.

Often being a member of a writing group has allowed people to “give themselves permission” as Kay Dennis from the Ballymun group would say. This is a vital necessity for all of us who grew up brainwashed by the idea of The Expert. We need space to discover and build up our own expertise and this is one of the things the writing groups give. It begins by encouraging people to read and examine their own writings in the group, moves on to holding public readings and may go on to publication. The readings need one form of organising, publication another. Group members learn many new skills which can vary from advertising an event, doing their own paste-up or raising funds. These may sound like simple matters to those practised at them, but if you’ve never done anything like that before it can be quite nerve-wracking! These new skills can be applied in other situations, or passed on to other groups: they are never wasted.

All this may seem to have little to do with the phenomenon of growth of local writing groups, but I believe it is an integral part of that growth.

THE APPEAL OF WRITING GROUPS

Overall the standard of writing coming from the groups is high, and it is always interesting. Much of the content of the work comes from personal experiences and this gives it an immediacy often lacking in what generally passes for literature. The subjects cover almost every subject under

the sun from the life of a Traveller, having a baby, childhood experiences, working lives or the day the first TV came to your street. For this same reason the writings have an immense appeal to readers. To escape into Dallas for the odd hour is one thing: to sit and read something you could have gone through yourself is quite another. To hear the pieces read, by the authors, over a foamy pint to a rapt audience is, if anything, even better. A good reading is an amazing event in itself. People's personal experiences are validated, appreciated and mulled over.

DISCOVERING CREATIVITY

In our educational system the arts are largely uncatered for, therefore it is hardly surprising that the majority of people don't perceive themselves as having creativity inside them. Often this is simply a case of never having had the opportunity or encouragement to express our creativity. Or expressing it in ways that are not yet defined as creative like gardening, decorating, dressmaking or cooking. Creativity is not just a "flash of genius", like any other skill it takes practice. Often the first results are disappointing and off-putting. Those people that are now accorded the title of artist, whether they be painters, writers, sculptors, musicians or whatever, all had to experiment and learn. It's just that we don't usually see the products of that stage of their developments. I've often wondered why this was so. In my more cynical moments I think its because they would inspire more people to give it a go!

So who sets the limits? The critics, the publishers or galleries, the market? The idea that one class is well-educated and thereby 'enabled' and the other poorly education and thereby 'disabled'? The mystique of The Expert, whereby a certain few (particularly if their skills are profitable) hoard unto themselves positions of power, authority and exclusiveness? The fascinating thing about the mystique or myth of The Expert is that it is self-perpetuating: if one person is an expert it follows naturally that most people aren't – otherwise what would be the point? One kind of Expert designed and built the Sellafield Nuclear Re-processing plant! Another went out and spent £22,000 of Dublin's money on a blank canvass by a famous American artist! The Nobel prize for literature last year went to Claude Simon a French writer whose work is so complicated and difficult to read you'd need a year of reading and lectures to appreciate it!

WOMEN WRITING

Another interesting aspect of the local writing groups is the predominance of women members. For centuries, the writings of women have either been ignored or patronised; many wrote under male pseudonyms. In some cases critics have attributed it to the woman's husband, father or lover! Yet women have persisted. Often their writing has taken the 'unpublic' form of letters and diaries. Now at last women writers by the dozens are "going public" by bringing the wealth of their work to the local writing groups. Most of the present groups have been set up by women, a fact which

shouldn't be ignored or forgotten. By early 1986 at least nine books/magazines of poems, stories and articles have been published by the groups themselves and one anthology of work from groups from the 32 counties was published by Womens Community Press. All have sold well, and received much praise from their readers. Most of these publications have been self-funded, since funding from bodies like the Arts Council to date has been rare and inadequate. Hopefully with their new community arts scheme, ACE, the situation will improve.

When Womens Community Press first approached the writing groups for material for the anthology "Write up Your Street", the response was enormous. Envelopes bulging with goodies came pouring through the door; the final choice of what to put in was extremely difficult. Working on that book was a great experience altogether. Four months after publication the phone rings with people looking to join their nearest group or tell of the formation of a new one. There was one extremely interesting lesson learned from that publication: the difference in publishing for nationwide distribution as opposed to purely local consumption. Stories were sent in entirely based on true events, without even the names being altered. This might have been o.k. in a publication of limited circulation, but it presented us with a few severe headaches and could have led to delicate situations. It also led to not publishing one of the most moving pieces (concerning the Stardust tragedy) in case legal proceedings could be jeopardised. When the word goes out for the next anthology, care will be taken to point out this difficulty to the groups.

Womens Community Press made a deliberate effort to contact particular groups, such as the Travellers, the Prisoners and Adult Literacy Groups, because we felt these groups are further marginalised by being left out – both by publishers and the general public in the U.S.A. and the U.K.

A list of local writing groups appears in the back of "Write up Your Street" for anyone interested in contacting them. This list is not complete because new groups form all the time. We also have addresses now for Sandymount, Athy, Waterford and Kilkenny.

SUE RICHARDSON has worked with Womens Community Press since its beginnings in 1983 and, with Noreen O'Donoghue, was co-editor of Pure Murder a book about drug use in Dublin from a Community point of view. She was briefly a non-prolific member of the Finglas Writing Group, and attended readings by as many writing groups as possible.

The Writing Group

PAULINE BRADY

"A treasure hunt" is how one woman described a writing group, "And you yourself are the treasure." A bit exaggerated perhaps and testing the rigour of any Trade Descriptions Act, but there is something exciting about discovering that you have the power to make people laugh, to make them feel sad, to evoke memories, to create atmosphere, to tell a good story, to strike a chord in the heart of someone. And it is possible to make that discovery in a writing group.

THAT FIRST MORNING

However, before that happens there is that first uneasy morning when the new members may also find out that the only thing they have in common is that they all like reading. While some may have been writing secretly for years, even have a novel buried in the attic, some may never have written a creative line in their lives but have finally found the courage to try. Together they provide part of the chemistry that makes a writing group work.

The first thing a beginner writer finds difficulty in believing is that you don't have to go outside your own neighbourhood or even your own door to find something to write about and that the strongest themes are generally ageless, classless and universal. The second thing is that there are people out there willing and pleased to publish your work, provided you give them what they want.

But having something to write about and knowing your markets are only two of the requirements for success in writing. Other crucial aspects of a writer's make-up are style, imagination, determination and the relentless pursuit of craftsmanship. A writing group cannot supply imagination and, while style can be discussed, it cannot be acquired in ten or indeed any number of easy lessons; it is not a transferable commodity. Instead it is something that can begin only with the individual.

THE CRAFT OF WRITING

One of the most important contributions of a writing group is the awareness and the development of the craft of writing and this is where the real enjoyment emerges. The learning of any craft involves trial and error and constant observation of how other people achieve their results. There is an added advantage here in that on the way you find you are reading with the eye of a writer. However, your sharpened awareness of Joyce's stream of consciousness technique and Dylan Thomas's selection of telling detail are only abstractions until you get down to writing one thousand words on something like "Fear."

Though you feel the subject should write itself, for the first time you are aware of such things as reader interest, plausibility, consistency and strong endings. You may decide that your first offering to the writing group is worthless but then you discover that the person next to you has produced the piece you would have loved to have written. You will then analyse how she did it and you didn't. That is after the rest of the group has given its reactions to both your contributions.

Criticism is a vital part of any writing group. It will not be the criticism of literary geniuses but the reaction of honest readers who are capable of saying why they liked a poem, why they are unhappy with a character or why they believe a plot to be untenable. Criticism is never harsh or destructive because each critic is a writer and therefore understands a writer's feelings.

Above all else a writing group can increase your determination to write. But first of all, you must convince yourself that what you are doing is worthwhile because you have something to say and more importantly you have an individual way of saying it.

BEING PUBLISHED

While getting published does not necessarily have to be the goal of everybody in a writing group – some are quite content to write for their own enjoyment – the market-testing of your work can be of great guidance and help. This, however, involves putting your sensitivities at the mercy of the various editors, features' editors and publishers. It is an unhappy fact of most writers' lives that rejection slips seem to pave the way to success. In the meantime, a writing group fosters resilience and hope, as well as a constant and close study of all the available markets.

A class co-ordinator could talk forever about how to get published but it is only when the participants see for themselves the ultimate success of even one member that they believe that it could happen for them.

Even for those who discover early success in publishing, the weekly class provides the necessary stimulation until a rhythm of writing is established. When that is achieved, then listening to other peoples' conversations, going to the supermarket, watching a film, having a row – all the ordinary happenings of life – become part of the new writer's reference library. It is when the little old lady at the bus stop ceases to be merely a little old lady and becomes the heroine of your latest story that you know that you have arrived as a writer. Then you say to yourself as Saul Bellow once did "I have in mind another human being who will understand me, I count on this."

PAULINE BRADY is a teacher of English. She has worked extensively with writing groups in the Co. Dublin area, and has had her own work published.

Why Am I Here?

JOE JENNINGS

A few weeks ago my wife arrived home and said she had booked in to a Watercolour class. She then added that she had booked me into a Creative Writing class. Instantly I felt important. The name I thought would sound good when I told the lads of my new found interest. Then I suddenly remembered to ask, "Isn't education of this kind expensive?" having considered the cost of educating the 12 children, "On account of you being a senior citizen it was only £2!" Immediately I felt that for only £2 it couldn't be much good, but I'd try it. You see, I already had a drawer full of thousands of words which the publishers had returned to me with thanks. They didn't even add "Try again". So I thought maybe I could discreetly find out what was really wrong or was I the only one who enjoyed my own writing.

I remember one occasion where the threat of my being a writer had the desired effect. It was in Shanf Migh. This is an ancient city in North Thailand on the Chinese border. The manager was delaying in giving me my change so I had to act quickly to catch my plane to Bangkok. So I said "I'm a writer and I'll expose you in the media". You'd think I pulled a gun on him he operated so fast in my favour.

My first day in class was to begin with an anti-climax. I arrived to a dusty freezing room. There was no one else there so I began to figure out which was the top or bottom of the class. A lady appeared, I asked her did she know where was the bottom of the class because I couldn't imagine me being at the top of the class. In my school days the bottom was always too near the top of the class, like the Scotsman who travelled 3rd class because there was no 4th. After about an hour in the class I began to wonder what was the word for freezing to death. "Hypothermia" I thought would do. I could see the heading in the Evening Press "Little known builder-cum-student dies of hypothermia". I began to think how much better the heading would sound if it read "Creative writer dies in Dundrum class room of heart attack". My friends would assume that I was the teacher, not a student. I went home on that first day and as I travelled along Mt. Anville Road I began to wonder – maybe she wanted to get rid of me and for only £2.

I began to think would I accuse her of trying to kill me, but then if she benefitted financially there'd be some point in it, and she'd surely electrocute herself because she didn't know how to use a phase tester. She'd miss me making the frames for her pictures. When I arrived home she appeared delighted to see me and made me a cup of tea that acted as anti-freeze. "I'm not going back to that morgue again. I don't want to die young," I said. I will never know why she booked me in in the first place because she never read anything I wrote, and I never told her of my secret ambition to become a writer and poet. As the week wore on and I began to thaw out I began to think of the gorgeous teacher with the pleasant manner and the crack with the lady writers and the boys, so I decided to return to the class and give it another try, which I did having put on extra clothes.

On this occasion we were asked to write on what we hoped to get out of this class, or why we were there. My first thought was I'm damned if I know. My second was that she should have reversed the question to read as follows: "What do we hope not to get out of here?" I thought of pneumonia, which was the most likely thing we'd get out of it. I've already got the symptoms, but I had them all this winter. I can't figure out the good business sense in getting £40 for an article and paying £80 to the doctor. I think I'm in the wrong class, maybe I should try First Aid.

JOE JENNINGS is "a little known builder from Dundrum" and a member of The Fountain Writing Group.

The Tree

RITA MURRAY

It was cold walking through the park and a stiff wind blew in her face as she pushed the baby's pram against it. She walked briskly like someone with a purpose. "Am I mad?" she asked herself as she pushed on. She had walked five miles from her home to the park. What had started off as an afternoon stroll with Abigail led her to the park and the tree.

There it stood so big and strong, almost regal, yet welcoming her in the fading sunlight. The seat was still there under its thick branches which were shedding their leaves in the Autumn winds. As she stood next to the tree, she leaned her face against its scarred bark and felt a wave of happiness followed by sorrow surge through her. For here, under this tree, she had spent some very happy moments and some sad and bitter ones. "Oh how I wish I were you standing here devoid of feelings and emotions," she whispered to the tree. "I must shake myself out of this," she said to herself. Why had she come here today, she murmured, as tears rolled unheeded down her face.

She sat down and leaned her back against the tree's rough bark, though to her it felt soft and comforting. It crossed her mind that Vince might be home from work by now and wondering where she and her baby daughter were. Then she remembered it was Friday, the day most people loved. The start of the weekend, but for her it was the start of a nightmare which usually lasted till the following Tuesday or Wednesday. If he was true to form, he would arrive home around eleven o'clock, too drunk to eat, not that he would admit to it of course. He would complain about the meal and hurl his drunken abuse which could make her face flare red to even think of some of the names he called her. At first she was horrified and bewildered and then so terribly hurt for a long time afterwards. At first she fought back but now she did all she could to avoid confrontation for Abigail's sake and felt totally lacking in pride and self-respect. Sometimes after his drunken bouts, he would be filled with remorse and it would be "I love Stephenie" time again. Other times, he would turn the situation around to make it seem like she started the whole scene and not the cursed drink.

Suddenly she thought: "Why am I thinking of my husband like this. I certainly don't want to think of him. No, I want to sit here and think how different my life could have been". She turned around and a serene smile lit up her troubled face as she looked at initials carved on the old tree, "B loves S". Her mind wandered back to the day Brian put that on the tree and how he laughed when she scolded him for scratching the lovely bark. She said "How would you like someone to scratch your arm like that?". It seemed cruel to mar the crisp rust-coloured bark. He laughed and said: "It didn't feel anything". He then added softly and almost shyly: "Poor tree, not to be able to feel the love I have for you and the happiness I've felt since we met". It was under this tree where they loved and laughed and it was here, three years later, that she told Brian about meeting someone else and that

she couldn't marry him feeling the way she did for Vince. She was so sorry for hurting Brian, but she felt Vince needed her. She knew he drank a little, but that was because he was unhappy at home and once they were together they would be so happy. Too late, she found that what her new husband wanted and needed more than her love was drink and nights out with the boys.

Suddenly Stephanie came out of her reverie with the sound of Abigail whimpering in the pram. "O God!" she cried aloud, "it's getting dark, I have to go". She should be giving her baby her tea and preparing her for bed. As she stood up, she resolved to herself to stop this self-pity that was taking over her life. So, as she was about to leave, she whispered to the tree. "I am going to be as strong as you one day, for you were not always as strong as you are now and I like you, I will have a heart of wood. So when my husband cuts my bark and pulls my leaves, I will feel nothing. If you can't feel, you can't be hurt. Good bye Tree".

The Fever

PENNY SMITH

David's illness began at 3 a.m. Liz, awakened by the familiar sound of the child coughing, choking and retching, hurried to his bedside. Cradling him in her arms, she felt his small body heave and twist as the spasms hit him, evoking small broken cries of pain and distress and Liz knew that this was the start of another bout of fever. In the semi-darkness, she became aware that Niall was beside her, and although they were silent she felt their unspoken dread. It had happened often enough in the past. David's asthma would flare up, leaving him breathless, weak and unable to eat. He would vomit the viscuous phlegm which clogged his chest. The coughing would go on and on, giving him no rest. Liz bent her head over the crying child and struggled with her own tears of anger and frustration.

David was awake that first night until dawn, calling to her intermittently so that she could not rest. At last he fell into a fitful sleep for an hour or so, but Ross woke early and their first day had begun.

Liz was weary but resigned that morning, and even managed to laugh at herself for the night's hysteria. As she took the child, hot and heavy-eyed from his cot, she wondered why she had felt so pessimistic about his illness this time. Yes, it was distressing for them all, and she would have to get David to a doctor straight away, but why this emotional over-reaction? Pre-menstrual tension perhaps, she thought, smiling inwardly at the fashionable excuse, but the thought triggered off something which she couldn't pinpoint, and continued to prod away at her on and off all that morning.

It was merely a ghost of something not quite remembered nor forgotten, not important enough to dredge her memory for.

It was later, waiting to see the doctor, that the vague remembrance crystallized in her mind and made her stomach give an odd lurch. Ross was playing noisily in the waiting room while David sat quietly on her lap and sucked his thumb. For the moment, there was nothing she could do to test her theory, but as soon as they returned home, she rummaged for her diary. Yes, the half-remembered image of the page in front of her was clear now. There was the all-important tick beside yesterday's date. She looked up. Yes, she was already a day overdue.

Liz sat down and checked the dates again, leafing back through the diary, thinking over the previous month, piecing together events. There was no mistake, she was a day late. The cloud of foreboding that had followed her all that day condensed into actual fear.

That evening David was too ill to be left and Liz tucked Ross into their own double bed and slept beside the baby's cot. During the next two hot, feverish nights she was woken continually by the sick child. She lay awake in the narrow bed deprived even of the physical comfort of Niall beside her, and in the darkness her tired brain relentlessly scratched at the raw wound of her anxiety. At the beginning she told herself that a day was

nothing, but each day brought new hope and fresh disappointment, each night the monotonous sifting of the possibilities. She was not prepared for another baby. David needed all her resources at times like this. Ross already missed out when his brother was ill. There was no room in her life for another child. Occasionally, in a lighter mood, she managed a wry smile at her predicament, the perennial fear of women everywhere, an unwanted pregnancy. She'd been caught, trapped rather, yes, trapped in a situation she did not want and could not control. She tossed and turned, tried to sleep, tended the child and waited.

On the third night, David slept a little better and when he woke her, Liz was too tired to do anything but fall asleep again straight away. In any case, her pregnancy was a virtual certainty in her mind now. There was nothing she could do. Her obsession had burned itself out into a dull pain in her head that shadowed her every mood.

On the fourth night, Liz persuaded a protesting Ross to return to his own bed and climbed wearily in beside Niall. She said nothing to him of her fears, but as she lay beside him that night, her thoughts were calmer. A winter baby would be a new experience. Ross would be at school by then. David would outgrow the asthma, as most children did, these attacks would become rarer. They would manage. There was time, time to adjust, make plans, times to assimilate this new factor in her scheme of things. By the time she fell asleep that night, Liz had achieved a sort of peace of mind.

The next day was Sunday and Liz packed Ross off on his bicycle with Niall while David slept. She wrapped the small boy carefully in his scarf and hat, measuring her gestures. She wanted to be alone now, her quiet time was beginning.

It was while they were out that the fantasy came to an end. Liz looked at the tell-tale stain blankly, disbelievingly, as though she was in a state of suspended animation. A sense of reality gradually returned. Nothing had changed, life went on, there was no secret, no hidden dimension, no promise of new fulfillment, no child. Fate had fooled her for once.

She went upstairs and stood beside David's bed, watching the sleeping child. His face in repose was peaceful and his breathing even and strong. His fever was at an end. From the window she could see Niall and Ross returning, talking and laughing together. They knew nothing of the small private drama played out over the past few days; they did not know and now they would never know. One question at least, Liz thought, had been answered, some eventual long-term decision perhaps. There had never been a child. But as she went downstairs to let them in, she could not shake off a small, totally irrational, yet quite unmistakable sense of loss.

PENNY SMITH lives in Celbridge, Co Kildare and is a member of the Leixlip Writers' Group.

Problems of Night School Provision

JOHN LAHIFF

There have been some developments in adult education in recent years – such as the appointment of Adult Education Organisers and the establishment of Adult Education Boards following the report 'Lifelong Learning'. There is a new emphasis on Literacy, community education and women's education. But school-based adult education has seen little change. The level of provision for adults learning has many shortcomings, and what follows is an attempt to look at some of these.

The provision of Adult Education is marginal to the public consciousness. This has two possible aspects. We, the providers, may be guilty of poor promotion and advertising: and the time and effort we can put into research and development is very limited. As a result the public at large do not see Adult classes as a source of personal development and enrichment, and are not always aware of what is available.

There is little political interest as there are few votes in developing post-initial education. If people are not convinced that Adult Education has something to offer, they are not going to generate pressure for its provision.

There is a wide range of provision, but no network of provision. This is true both at Government inter-departmental level and in relation to the providing agencies. The National Association of Community Education Directors (N.A.C.E.D.) attempts to co-ordinate what is happening in the 59 Community/Comprehensive schools, but it is run on a voluntary basis, and in such limited spare time as people have available. By and large, developments in Ireland have been fragmented and on an 'ad hoc' basis. There has been little research and limited attempts to co-ordinate what is happening. It is to be hoped that the formation of the Adult Education Boards, and the current appraisal by Aontas of its role will stimulate developments in this area.

The curriculum range tends to be narrow. This is so for two reasons. Up to the present, commercial viability has dictated what 'runs' and most of us are at best part-timers in the field. It is more expedient to mimic what is known to be successful elsewhere than to break new ground. Also, if the provision is marginal to public consciousness, so is the scope of Adult Education. If clients were more discerning, they might be more demanding.

Goals need to be clarified. This applies to the learner, the tutor and the provider. Very often people embark on a course of action having become more or less conscious of a need, but not having crystallised needs into goals. Two things may happen. The action (e.g. participating in a course) may help to crystallise a goal, and so become part of the process. Or the learner may become increasingly aware that the need is not being answered, and so

become disenchanted. On the part of the tutor it has to be remembered that adults bring a wide range of experience and definite objectives to the learning process. Course development is an on-going process which needs a high level of negotiation between tutor and learner. Without this (for whatever reason) there is no guarantee that a common end is envisaged.

Providers, due to lack of time or a set of conflicting interests, may fail to ensure that all parties have clarified the objective of the learning exercise.

There is a lack of finance. This is probably stating the obvious. The monies spent on Adult Education provision are a pittance when contrasted with the expenditure on third, second, and first level education. Many tutors in Adult classes are part-timers, often with a full-time occupation in a related field. This usually means that tuition fees are heavily taxed. This is such a disincentive that at times it is hard to recruit tutors. A case could be made for allowing such fees to be taxed at a basic rate.

There are administrative limitations in terms of time and training. Those of us who are administering adult education in a school base are full-time teachers with a very limited time allowance. The more successful the programme, the more time consuming it becomes. A serious commitment to adult education requires a much more generous time allowance. Training for directors of adult education is almost non-existent. Much of it is done by a process of trial and error.

There are limitations in the briefing and training of staff. This is linked to the last point. There is a time constraint, there is little finance, and there is a shortage of expertise in the training of tutors. The second report on the supply and training of teachers in Great Britain (1978) recommended a three-stage modular approach to the training of adult educators:— Stage I — To be taken prior to commencing teaching and lasting 36 hours. It might cover motives and expectations of teachers and students; the setting of aims and objectives; an introduction to learning theory; planning learning situations; introduction to teaching aids and introduction to lesson evaluation. Stage II — This would require 60 hours attendance and 30 hours practice, and would cover the above in more depth. Stage III — Courses of 300 hours or more leading to certification.

If this is the ideal, then we have some way to go, though I understand that some efforts are being made to initiate training here. An example is found in the provision by County Meath V.E.C.

There is a lack of feed-back and research. With little or no network, feed back becomes very difficult. Research requires time and finance, and as already stated both are in short supply. Research has to be seen as one of the priority areas in Adult Education.

There is no counselling services available to students. The need for this is best illustrated by realising that the motivation to learn is a process which can be divided into a number of stages.

- (i) The learner is passive and not aware of new learning needs.

- (ii) The learner become anxious, realising that s/he does not know enough.
- (iii) S/he seeks information about learning opportunities.
- (iv) The learner chooses from among options; and goals may be modified by factors such as time and course outline.
- (v) S/he begins learning and may find difficulty in study or a lack of self-confidence, or progress may be hindered by external commitments and other pressures.
- (vi) The learner persists (or not).
- (vii) S/he reaches a goal.

All of these stages could be facilitated by the availability of a counselling service.

If all of this appears as a very pessimistic view of adult education, it is not intended as such. Rather it is an attempt to pin-point some of the areas to which we might address ourselves if we see that we have arrived at 'a time for change'.

JOHN LAHIFF is Director of Adult and Community Education at Greendale Community School, Kilbarrack, Dublin. He is author of the recent N.A.C.E.D. publication "A Manual for Tutors" and Treasurer of the National Association of Adult and Community Education (N.A.C.E.D.). He is also a guidance counsellor.

Men Are OK?

JOE KELLY

In March 1986 the first ever Men's Conference was held in Dublin. Over one hundred men attended and workshops covered a diverse range of subjects, including, Men and Women, Men and Sexism, Fathers and Sons and Men and Unemployment. Joe Kelly, one of the organisers and an Adult Education Organiser in Dublin City, recalls some personal experiences of the Conference.

I couldn't sleep the night before. A mixture of excitement and apprehension. A men's conference, our men's conference was about to happen. The idea had been lying around for a while, waiting for somebody to pick it up, call a meeting...

We had done that: organised, planned, publicised, passed the word around, phoned, wrote letters, used word-of-mouth. Loads of interest – encouragement.

"It's about time."

"Well done."

"Of course, I'll be there."

But...that apprehension, would anybody turn up? How many? Fifty?...possibly. Sixty?...unlikely. Seventy?...never. That would be asking too much. It's the first time ever.

It was my job to open the conference, set the tone. Christ, I hope I don't stammer. I might sleep it out. Clive said he'd ring me. Clive might sleep it out. Better get an alarm clock call. For fuck sake, go asleep. What'll I wear?

Last minute details, bustle, nerves, panic, hugs, greetings, buzz in the air. Eamon grabbed my arm.

"It's ten-past-ten."

"Let's start."

"Now?"

"Now! Right, O.K. Oh Jesus!

False start (where the fuck were my notes?). Standing there looking at a hundred men looking at me. Familiar, unfamiliar, powerful, strong, puzzled, smiling, supportive, nodding. It was an historic occasion. They were part of it. I felt it. Did they?

I spoke nervously, laughingly, enthusiastically, a bit over the top, but... O.K.

I stood at the back listening to Mick, nervous for him, hoping they'd like him. Watching them. It was O.K. He was great. So the mood continued. Small minor hiccups. Some of the rooms were too small for the workshops. Re-organise. Re-locate. Slow start to "Men and Sexism" but went reasonably well – (got to stop feeling responsible).

"I wish men would stop flogging themselves," said one of the group. I'm still thinking about that one. Lunch was busy, buzzing, noisy. Men

talking, laughing, sharing, swapping, caring, being nice to each other. Half-way there. Can't relax yet. James really had a difficult one, sorting out the afternoon workshops. Write it down – vote – cross it out. Decide, change your mind, vote again.

Relief. It was brilliantly over.

Why did I agree to run another workshop? Laborious. I was tired. Patriarchy! what did it mean? It seemed elusive, outside our experience. Men systematically oppressing....

Did that mean me? I'm a man. Do I oppress? Can a black man oppress a white woman? Is it racism? Is it sexism? Is it patriarchy?

Lots of questions; some answers; disagreements; confusion.

At least we men were asking questions. That felt good. Feedback. What next? Brendan, Senan, Clive, Eamon holding it together. Attention to detail – fussiness, I thought.

That two minutes' silence. Helped me feel my draining exhaustion. Flowers. Exhilaration. Photos. Madness. Congratulations. Is this what winning an all-Ireland Final is like? Colourful, bouncing, excited male adult children. We were on a high.

Sat in Sheehan's, grinning at each other. Pouring over every detail of the day. Recounting, recalling, filling in, smirking smugly with pride.

Given the information and opportunity, men can be O.K. Men are O.K. We don't want to hurt. We want to love and be loved. There's a long way to go. It's only the beginning. I'm even sleeping better.

JOE KELLY is Adult Education Organiser in Dublin City. He has pioneered the movement which encourages voluntary groups to become involved in the provision of day-time adult education and he is at present exploring new avenues in men's learning.

A View of Education and the Unemployed

SIGHE L'ESTRANGE

At the outset, I would like to say that my description of the effects of being unemployed for a long time are from my own experience, making this a one-woman sample; but from other people's conversations and behaviour, I think that it is likely that I present a fairly typical picture. Perhaps, then, the experience I had on a course designed to help the unemployed back into employment can also be regarded as being helpful for a large number of the victims of the situation.

BACKGROUND

I had left South Africa with my teen-aged daughters in 1980 to return to Ireland. I was in my mid-forties and had a long career in magazine journalism and public relations behind me and was reasonably confident of finding employment without any very great difficulty. In the first three months after my arrival, I went to interview after interview in Dublin. There is an unbelievable number of magazines and newspapers operating in the capital. I also saw every public relations consultancy, which was bigger than a one-person operation, and there are a fair number of these. It was a busy time and hopeful too. The recession was not really upon us and the enjoyment of a different and pleasant environment was stimulating. The percentage of interviews which were obviously unsuccessful was very small, most seemed possible and a handful were probable. In retrospect, I was perhaps over optimistic; I had not yet realised that the Irish were charming in all situations – I had come from a country where pleasantness is the norm only in social situations. At that time, advertisements for suitable jobs were still appearing in the newspapers and I succeeded in being interviewed for many of these. I began to experience one of the bitterest aspects of job seeking: a seemingly successful interview: a waiting period which stretches from days to weeks in dead, morale-breaking silence, a telephone call to the company and eventually the situation becomes clear – no job.

It is a common and horrendous situation, this skin-tearing limbo that employers create. A note in the mail is not too much to expect from people who, in other respects, have their business activities under adequate control. Quite apart from common courtesy, in these days of mass unemployment, this lack of charity is brutal and brutalising.

APATHY.

Eventually as the weeks became months, hope was dwindling and jobs were becoming scarcer. I was entering the next phase of being unemployed. I was loath to submit myself to the emotional rollercoaster of writing a job application: going to an interview, coming away: trying, over the fol-

lowing days, to fight the persistently springing hope and then the reluctant acceptance that once again it had all come to nothing. I don't think I am oversensitive or a coward but it became almost impossible to answer the advertisements. It really required the utmost discipline to sit down and write that letter and all the time, guilt was growing. Guilt about what? Guilt that I didn't have whatever it took to persuade someone somewhere that I could do a competent job and boost their profits. Guilt because apparently I didn't measure up to Irish standards; guilt because I was having to say no to my daughters' requests for new shoes, a trip to the movies, whatever. Guilt because we were eating less well. Guilt because the strain of living on capital with small prospect of employment was so frightening that I was becoming a grim, joyless, preoccupied woman and my daughters were bearing the brunt of that burden. Guilt because my terror was becoming my children's terror. Guilt because I hadn't earned my place in a new society. Guilt because I wasn't contributing to the community in any way.

ISOLATION.

I was very isolated, knew very few people, had no family in the immediate background. I learnt afterwards that families are not always supportive. Many of those on the dole are labelled idlers and inadequate by the nearest and dearest. From a distance, my own family were supportive, money kept the wolf from the door and the heartening letters and suggestions kept me going from day to day. My daughters felt I wasn't trying hard enough but were sensitive enough to keep that among themselves. My ways began to fall into the classic pattern of unemployed apathy. I didn't get out of bed before midday. It was only my feeling of shame that the children would come home to find me still in bed that got me up. By the time school was over, the house was uncharacteristically immaculate. It was one contribution I could make even if I got small satisfaction from the domestic round. Shopping for food was now a daily rather than a weekly event: it created a contact point with the rest of the human race. Frequent trips to the library were another element to create something to do and, of course, having always been a reader, this now became an addiction. I escaped from reality into other people's lives. Television was another anodyne. Obviously all this was reasonably harmless. Drink, drugs, tranquilizers would have been infinitely more damaging but all escapes from reality are dangerous and harmful. But I began to realise that, as a woman at least, I had a house and children to give my very existence some shape or form. I have watched men on the dole queue become more and more demoralised and I am sure that it is the sheer emptiness of their lives which has this effect.

Thus the pattern of my days: I dreaded Sundays as the shops were closed cutting off one diversion. I met few people and could afford to go nowhere and do nothing because my disappearing capital must obviously go as far as possible. The future was a featureless moonscape without hope and my life seemed to lie under a layer of deadening pumice dust. Total unemployment apathy had taken over.

Inevitably my capital was finished and I joined the dole queue. After about eighteen months, I applied to go on an AnCO course for the long-term unemployed which lasted for twelve weeks, the last three being devoted to work experience.

THE COURSE

An aspect of the course which was emphasised was job seeking: the compiling of C.V.s and interview techniques. Hand in hand with this went self evaluation techniques, self assertion training, and a general shake up of one's attitudes towards oneself. There were twenty-four of us on the course, seventeen men and seven women. We ranged in age from early twenties to late forties and the socio-economic spectrum could hardly have been wider. Different aspects of the course were effective for different people but a fairly simple exercise made me feel like Paul on the road to Damascus. We wrote every skill we felt we had on a large piece of paper. Once I had written every skill, no matter how simple, the list was yards long and suddenly I realised that I wasn't totally incompetent. We had started the course as a very disparate group of people who had little to say for ourselves or to each other. There was very little participation from any of us to start with. We survived the baptism of fire involving a two minute speech on any topic we desired after ten minutes' preparation. People began to assert themselves once again and participation and comment became lively, penetrating and thoughtful. Every other week, a day was devoted to job seeking and some left the course as they found jobs. Those of us who remained became a close cohesive group, who had regained confidence in ourselves. We had fifteen visiting lecturers during this period who found themselves challenged, cross questioned and generally examined on their basic premises. Their specialities covered a wide range of expertise from industrial relations to psychiatry, adult education to management techniques and more. Not all was of importance to everyone but even on subjects which didn't seem relevant, there was always something of interest. I believe that the keystone to the success of this course was the re-integration of a sense of personal worth and a reborn confidence. I think that if this aspect is ignored in the education of the unemployed, the effort will fail.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

The course gave me back a sense of myself that enabled me to pursue the idea of turning my knitting skills into an export enterprise. Everything has not run smoothly as I pursued this. However, now I had the determination and the confidence to go on and, slowly but surely, things are improving. Without the course, it would probably have remained an idea and I doubt if I would have had the determination to continue when there didn't seem any way to expand my activities to a point where they would become financially viable. That appears to be on the horizon now and I am pushing forward towards a point where I shall be a self-supporting member of the human race once again.

The appalling waste of people on the dole queue is tragic. The quality of life is so diminished as to turn existence into a dull agony. Education can open the door into a meaningful world once again. Unemployment has been a continuing fact of life in Europe since the Industrial Revolution and the causes are complex but in common humanity, action is necessary. Unemployed people in England have free access to education. It is time we followed suit.

SIGHE L'ESTRANGE returned to Ireland from South Africa in 1980. A journalist and public relations consultant, she has been unemployed for the last six years.

Community University Project

KATHLEEN FORDE

They knew it would work. They knew there were multitudes of women out there with untapped potential, sitting around at home, working themselves into a state about new curtains or aluminium windows, feeling that vague, undefined longing to use their minds and find again the stimulation they once enjoyed in life. They knew that if U.C.D. agreed to run three extra-mural courses in Killester Vocational School (north Dublin City) for twenty weeks that there would be enough participants to make Community University Project (C.U.P.) viable.

U.C.D. wasn't too sure though, so with the backing of Maurice Manning, their local T.D. and a lecturer in U.C.D., they spent last summer negotiating with the registrar, Professor Patrick Masterson, and finally succeeded in convincing him that it would work.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

Who are those determined, enthusiastic visionaries? Meryl Coll, June Rooney and Antoinette Sheerham and between them they have twelve children. What led them to spend their summer in such a manner? Their involvement with a local community education project in Kilbarrack called K.L.E.A.R. What's so great about K.L.E.A.R.? It took Adult Education out of the closet of night schools and made it available in the morning time with creche facilities for a large segment of the population, mostly women, who would never have thought of returning to classes otherwise.

"It was so stimulating, suddenly being liberated from the confines of house and babies and to actually be studying and thinking," says Antoinette. June decided to start with the hardest subjects on offer, Leaving Cert. English and History, in order to ease the guilt she felt at taking time away from the house and family responsibilities. "The day I was most mentally jaded was the day I sat for the Leaving Cert. exam. I envy people in high-powered jobs and all the stimulation they have," says June. The women felt strongly about the need for on-going and appropriate accreditation for the courses they did. At one stage June was spending six hours a week in class over twenty weeks and had nothing to show for it in the end.

With such whetted appetities, they now wanted to go further and try something at third level, "a taste of First Arts," as Meryl puts it. They advertised in *Northside News*, Christina Murphy wrote a piece about them in the *Times*, Michael Hand did an article in the *Evening Herald*, referring to them as "housewives," which they thought appalling, but it proved a blessing in disguise, as the message got through to all those women in the home who would otherwise have thought that C.U.P. was for some species of super-women only.

Marie Moore is one of the 104 people who enrolled in Killester Vocational School on 1st October 1985, the day C.U.P. actually began. "I was looking

for something to do, I wasn't even sure what it was. My youngest child was eleven. Lip-service is paid to being a housewife and mother, but the job carries no recognition or status," claims Marie. She wishes she had the advantage of being involved in K.L.E.A.R. But she is delighted with her first year in C.U.P. "It was like a bomb going off in my head. Now I'm taking in more and more and my brain is expanding all the time."

DEVELOPING A BRIDGING COURSE

During 1985-86 U.C.D. provided lecturers in English, History and Sociology at first year university level for three mornings a week. The cost was £40 per subject per term. Many people had to be turned away because there was no creche, but there will be one next year. The women warmly praised Aidan Mulligan, the Principal of Killester Vocational School for the co-operation and help they received from him. The teenage students in the school were all very courteous to them and accepted their presence in a natural manner.

"This type of bridging course is badly needed," says June, "because for many mature students, the jump into the unknown of third level is too much of a gamble." Next year they want U.C.D. to provide the first ever off-campus part-time degree course in Killester. "It would be impossible for most of these women to travel into town and right out the Southside to Belfield; they all have children. But if we could have classes out here then many people could avail of third level education," says Antoinette.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The women are talking with the N.I.H.E. and the Open University in Northern Ireland about providing a part-time degree course in Killester that could be done during the day, and over a longer period to facilitate people who have family commitments and cannot attend university in the so-called "normal" way. Meryl feels that "Women work so hard at nurturing and caring for all around them, they need at some stage to do something for themselves. I welcome the day governments take adult education seriously, and university education will be available to those that want it - and not just for the privileged few."

Most of the dynamism and growth in adult education over the past few years has arisen from the participation of women who have formed their own learning groups with cooperative management structures and creche facilities. Many of these groups have branched out to do their own thing, different from traditional concepts of adult education, which is not taken seriously in this country. If it were, the women feel, it could lead to major political and social changes. June Rooney sums this all up: "I am thirty seven years and my ambition is to gain as much knowledge as possible. I feel I know so very little I am almost panic-stricken in case I have not got enough time left in the world to even step on the first rung of the ladder of knowledge."

KATHLEEN FORDE is an Adult Education Organiser with the City of Dublin VEC. She is based in Coolock where her main involvement is with the development of day-time Adult Education provision.

Education in Retirement

MAURICE KENNEDY

Retirement has taken on a new and more enlightened meaning in modern times. No longer is it looked upon as the signal for withdrawing from society, the path to obscurity leading to a lonely, inactive and depressive life-style – ‘The Twilight of the Gods’. On the contrary, retirement is now recognised as the time for new and exciting experiences – the signal to become more and more part of society, to make new friends, to enjoy the company of others, to acquire new skills, to share experiences, pastimes, hobbies, it is the ‘up, up and away’ syndrome. In fact the very word ‘retired’ is fast going out of favour. Perhaps the word ‘released’ might be a better one. Released from the treadmill having ‘earned’ the freedom to lead a meaningful, purposeful, enjoyable and relaxed lifestyle. The twentieth century Renaissance!

More than anything else, education, in a general way, has contributed to and influenced this process of change. It challenges the prejudices and wrong attitudes such as too old at sixty; lost the capacity for learning; can’t make new friends and all the other myths so long associated with retirement. Education is of course, a continuous and on-going process. Nowadays great emphasis is being placed on the role education plays before retirement – preparing for the change so as to make the transition easier and learn how to adjust more easily to a new lifestyle. Education can provide older people with a sense of achievement, fulfilment, companionship but, most important of all, the therapy that keeps the mind stimulated and alert and so counters, alleviates and at least delays, the sadder effects of ageing.

In the report ‘Lifelong Learning’, 16% of the adult population were described by the Commission as participants in adult education. I.e. those who had attended a course in the three years previous to the survey. The corresponding percentage for people 65 years and over who were described as participants was 4%. The figures for Britain are somewhat similar. To take these figures at their face value could be off-putting and give the impression that practically all retired people have a negative attitude towards education. To be realistic, the majority of people retiring would have been away from the environment of formal education since their teens or early twenties. They might well have had an unpleasant educational experience earlier in life and might now have the feeling of being too old to learn. Such people would need a lot of persuasion to register for a course in formal education in a school or college and become, perhaps, the centre of curiosity, comment or worse. Living on reduced incomes, many pensioners might not be able to afford the standard fees. Another point is that, on retirement, many people want some activity to occupy their day time hours rather than their evenings. Consequently, night classes are not the best solution. Also older people will not venture out at night in these violent times. All these factors might explain why such a small percentage of older people register for educational courses. This strengthens the case that older people are in a special category when it comes to education and special arrangements and facilities will have to be made to accommodate them. 25

THE DUN LAOGHAIRE EXPERIENCE OF ACTIVE RETIREMENT

An interesting development has taken place in Dun Laoghaire. This Borough has the highest proportion of retired people in the country. It became apparent that there were insufficient opportunities or facilities for such people to meet, plan and arrange for themselves how they wished to spend their time in retirement. The idea of forming an Association for such people was mooted.

The Dun Laoghaire Active Retirement Association was started in 1978. It took root quickly. As membership increased, it became apparent that quite a number were interested in the non-examination area of education. Two officers of the Association, Eileen Horley and Maurice Kennedy, together with the Community Development Officer, Jack Dunphy, approached the Principal of the Dun Laoghaire Community College, Richard Kelly. The needs of the members were explained and discussed. As a result, special day time classes were arranged. A very favourable fee structure for members attending these classes was implemented. The classes filled very quickly. The college is currently conducting classes in Art, French, Spanish and Woodwork. Thus a group of retired people, complete strangers, of various social, economic and educational backgrounds came together with one common interest, simply to enter again the educational field but in the company of others of like mind. In such an environment inhibitions and sensitivities were quickly shed. This was a significant breakthrough.

To say that this is education with the discipline and within the confines of the College is correct. Yet there is something special about the way these classes are conducted that breaks down the formality of the classroom. There is a unique Tutor/Learner rapport. The attitudes of all these teachers toward the older learners is one of understanding, patience and friendliness. The teaching methods they use is geared for the older learner. There is an easy and pleasant and lighthearted competitiveness. A most enjoyable time was had during break time in a recent class. One of the class celebrated her 80th birthday complete with birthday cake and candle(s)!!

GIVING AND RECEIVING

As a gesture of appreciation for the co-operation which the Community College extends to The Active Retirement Association the members run the college library. A group of 20 members of the Association supervise the school library and study room for four hours each day on a rota basis during school term. This is another interesting development. Here you have the mix of the retired people with the young students, something that is of benefit to both age groups.

Each Autumn our members organise the cheese and wine party in the Town Hall, Dun Laoghaire, to launch the Borough's Adult Education week and then staff the Adult Education Exhibition in the Dun Laoghaire Shopping Centre.

Last year our members organised the catering arrangements for the official

opening of the Community College by the Minister of Education and attended by 300 guests. Members prepared and served the food, looked after floral arrangements, made a video of the proceedings, and cleaned up afterwards! In this way our members with their skills, expertise and experience contribute back into the community and so feel more part of it. The policy of sharing the skills and talents of the members for the benefit of the other members is very much encouraged. At the moment there are many classes run by the members themselves which include; French, Irish and German conversation classes, Needlecraft, Dressmaking, DIY in the Home, Electricity and Home Maintenance, an Art Club, a Book Club and a Gardening Club. The monitor, who is not paid, in each of these subjects is a member of the Association. What better form of mental stimulation, constructive activity, companionship and achievement can older people have? Take that away and all that might be left could be loneliness, depression and isolation.

The fact that a very high percentage of members (over 40%) actively participate in educational activities is revealing. This is more than 10 times above the national participation rate for this age group as revealed in the commission report referred to above. It indicates clearly that older people will, can and do become involved in grasping learning opportunities when the environment is supportive and enabling, adapted to their needs and within their control.

To say that the Dun Laoghaire Active Retirement Association has brought education within easy reach of its 475 members is correct. It has of course done more than that. It also provides over thirty other activities in the social, cultural, and leisure fields.

AIMS OF ACTIVE RETIREMENT GROUPS

This brings into focus the aims and objectives of Active Retirement Associations. These are to provide the means and facilities to allow retired people to come together and organise by themselves how best they can spend their free time by utilising their skills and talents in the company of others who wish to do likewise.

There are now Associations in Artane/Raheny/Killester, Blanchardstown, Blackrock, Clontarf, Cabra, Crumlin, Dundrum, Drumcondra, Donnybrook, Foxrock, Haddington Road, Harold's Cross (Mount Argus), Harrington Street, Inchicore and Marino. These local Associations are community based and utilise the facilities and amenities available but at the same time the members are always finding ways and means with their own experience, energy and resources to contribute back into the community.

This is altogether different to the idea so prevalent that older people always are dependent on the services designed, run and funded by other groups in the community.

There is now a Federation of Active Retirement Associations which is made up of representatives from all the other Associations. Meetings are held each month. These provide the opportunity to exchange ideas, suggestions, discuss problems and give encouragement and help for the development

of each Association. The Federation also assists in the setting up of new Associations with information, encouragement and support. At the moment help is being given in the formation of three Associations in other areas. It will be interesting to see if what is happening in Dun Laoghaire can be equally successful in other areas where there are Active Retirement Associations.

MAURICE KENNEDY (Aged 75) is a retired Aer Lingus employee whose experience of Active Retirement with the Dun Laoghaire Association forms the basis for his reflections in this article.

Running a Course for Active Retirement

MAURA MURPHY

During a work study placement from a college in Adult Education, I had the opportunity of working in the Eastern Health Board Community Care Area 2. One of the concerns in this area was the high population of people aged sixty five years and upwards. Because people are moving into yet another stage of life at sixty five and health becomes a little more fragile, it was suggested that a programme to prepare people for such a stage in life, i.e. retirement, would be useful and appropriate. This programme was to be addressed to those people who had retired, or who had reached that particular life stage.

When I completed my course, I was offered the opportunity of devising and running such a course by the Health Education Co-ordinator for the Eastern Health Board Community Care Area 2. As a base for my work, I made enquiries about other retirement courses, their content and approach. I discovered that there was a similarity between what we had envisaged and what they had been doing. However, the process was different. They choose to deliver their material through lecture and slide from having a specialist approach. In the course I was planning, I wanted a more informal approach with as much group participation as possible. The emphasis was placed on people taking responsibility for their own decisions including health issues, and how to plan and spend time profitably.

The title of the course was to be simply: **A Course For Active Retirement**, and the course outline was as follows:

Adjusting to Retirement

Adjusting to a different stage in life, looking at life style, routines, planning time.

Looking at different work options e.g. pocket money, work, voluntary work, what are the possibilities?

Leisure time and how we use it – identifying interests, skills in this area.

Taking stock of yourself – explore the talent stock.

What sort of person you are – building networks.

Coping with Stress, Anxiety, Depression. What are the stresses. Some suggestions for coping.

How important is your diet – eating patterns – sensible suggestions.

Exercise for everyone – the benefits of exercise – different ideas for relaxation.

Helping the group to identify their particular problem areas and making plans for themselves.

The class took the form of a lecture/input from the course leader for 20 or 30 minutes approximately. The topic was then put to the group for questions and discussion. This was followed by a coffee break, which was seen by the group as important in that it gave them the opportunity to have informal discussions and meetings. Afterwards, the discussion was continued and preparations were made for the next session.

There was input also from invited speakers who addressed the group on topics such as banking and saving, University of the Third Age and forming an Active Retirement Association.

As a result of this course, the group decided they would like to set up an association and Co. Dublin V.E.C. then facilitated this stage in the development. The following term was spent meeting weekly as before, with the accent now on setting up an association. During this time, the participants visited and contacted other Active Retirement Associations, exchanged ideas and received help from them.

By the summer they had formed an Active Retirement Association with a working committee from the group, each person taking some responsibility for some specific duty.

The Association has been running for a year. It has a membership of 70 and we have run two subsequent courses in Active Retirement since September 1985.

An interesting feature has emerged from the various groups who have taken part in the courses. It seems their perception of belonging to such a group/association is different from those who have not attended the courses. This shows itself in their eagerness to take charge of their own decisions and to accept responsibility for them. As a result of their shared experiences in the group, their relationship with each other seems to be on a different level i.e. more sensitive to each other's needs.

The participants on the courses have felt that the course has proved to be a useful learning experience for them. By coming together, they can share their views, learn about new possibilities and find a new appreciation of their gifts and talents.

MAURA MURPHY is a teacher of English working with adult groups in South Co. Dublin. She has also a special interest in the area of Active Retirement and the course that she has planned and run is, to our knowledge, the only one of its kind.

A Way With The Words

AD HOCK

Sean Mac Giolla Cainte was packing the conference bag. In any decent obituary, he could safely be placed as the well-respected member of the community who had rendered sterling service in his capacity as a public representative over a long number of years. He looked wistfully at the well-worn brown leather case and memories of the halcyon days of the Great Junketeers came flooding back. He could still recall the famous all-expenses paid trip with the task force from the Inland Waterways to study irrigation at the Niagara Falls, a trip he was later to describe in the local press as a watershed in his career. There was the expedition to China with the Irish Prisons Commission to survey the Great Wall and, never to be forgotten, a two-week sojourn in Stockholm with a party of co-op managers to investigate production of superior quality swedes for undernourished bullocks.

Alas, the golden days were gone and he shook his head ruefully as he reflected on the destination and purpose of the journey for which he was now preparing – Carrowmore and an adult education two-day workshop which had as its theme “Basic Welding as a Sentinal Concept in the Education of Underaged Yeomen”. Wonderful, he thought, bloody wonderful. He made his way slowly to the resource room where he kept his library of Conference Speak. He gazed for a long time at the well-stocked shelves of words, phrases and clichés before making a start in the difficult task of choosing.

Adult education, he pondered, what should he bring? Well, whatever the conference theme, the word ‘community’ would never be out of place. He threw it into the bag and then, with practiced hand, he plucked from the shelves suitable community co-ordinates, such as community-centred, – based, – oriented. Then followed the appropriate community nouns, such as welfare, group, programme and action.

Adult education – he had to stoop and examine the lower shelves to see if they might hold anything useful. On the lowest shelf he found the Murphy Report and right next to it the Report entitled Lifelong Learning. A quick browse through them and he was away. Needs – the very thing. He reached for the N shelf and flicked through a host of needs. Into the conference bag went needs to be identified, needs that must be met and of course, the converse, unmet needs. Local needs, basic needs and those inseparable twin needs, the perceived and the felt. He was feeling much better now, the old case was filling up nicely.

Now for the education buzz words. The distinction between education and training would be drawn, there would be argument and debate, everyone would agree that there is no difference, and then when the chairman was about to move on, some delegate would get up and speak about the distinction between training and education, and then there would be argument and... The trend of late, he had been informed, was away from education and towards learning. No problem there: if learning, then lifelong, adult,

self-directed; if education, then a feast – continuous, recurrent, basic, second chance, which he must define as the chance to miss again what you missed the first time. Then, at the very back of the shelf, he came on a real gem, education permanente (French). Typical of the French, he thought, to be getting it backways.

There wasn't much room left in the conference bag. He would have to include a share of geographicals – avenues to be explored, routes to be followed, mountains to be climbed. There would be information to be collated and presented, data to be processed. He would speak of facilitators, animateurs and rapporteurs. There would be assessment and evaluation, not to mention monitoring. He rehearsed a few phrases that had not been used for a while – initiatives are welcomed, progress is recorded, interest is stimulated, if it is not waning, response immediate, criticism constructive, dangers inherent, recessions economic and pressure brought to bear.

Then to the special pocket for the Latins, lest he should be called upon to speak adlib, ex tempore, impromptu or, as he had only once been accused, ad rem. A few caveats would not go astray. He smiled with pleasure as he remembered a time spent in Venice when the use of the gondola as a solution to Donnanaghy's traffic problems was under consideration. It was the time of the Second Vatican Council and he had created a marvellous impression with the Italians when, in a stuffy council chamber at a meeting which was dragging on and on, he announced that it was time for an aggiornamento.

Ah but he had fallen on evil days. An adult education seminar in Carrowmore. No use here talking about necessary infrastructure or putting anything into intervention. He took another look around the well-lined walls and his eye fell on "underprivileged". Now, there was a word that had seen better days. There was a time when, like the white horse, you could bring it anywhere and receive instant recognition as a champion of the oppressed. Not true any longer, as he had been advised that it would be better to arrive with the disadvantaged. Likewise, positive discrimination was rather passe and he wondered for a moment if he might start a fashion and bring two worlds together by putting the disadvantaged into intervention.

That was it, almost done. A few spares tossed in – focussing, addressing, redressing, tunnel vision, circumvention, total flexibility, stereotypes, malaise (French), sotto voce agis ní he la na gaoithe... the bag was ready. The delegate relaxed, easing himself into a mammoth armchair in the corner of the room. Soon he was nodding and dreaming, as happier times and places floated back into ken – sunny days in Jamaica observing at first hand the effects of the Black Economy...

AD HOCK is an important figure in adult education in Ireland. He came to his post the logical way, being a graduate of the Ballycroy Ballet. This, he says, accounts for the fancy footwork.

Partners in Education: Reflections on Green Paper

BARNEY O'REILLY

"Partners in Education, Serving Community Needs" in its thirty odd pages, makes three substantial references to adult education. In paragraph 2 it cites the recommendation in the Report of the Adult Education Commission on the establishment of Local Adult Education Boards as one of a number of developments that "have taken place within the last few years which require co-ordination at a regional or local level". "Co-ordination", "regional" and "local" are key, if unclear concepts in this Green Paper. Adult education is mentioned again when in paragraph 4, the proposed structure and role of the Local Education Council is outlined. It is suggested that there be on the new Local Education Council:

"one representative of each of the following:

Youth Services, Training/Manpower Agencies,
Adult Education Agencies and Economic Interests
including the social partners".

(Emphasis mine)

That there is no definition of what constitutes "Adult Education Agencies" becomes a problem when we note that the third (and final) reference to adult education comes in paragraph 5 where "the provision and co-ordination of adult education in its region" is identified as a function of the Local Education Council.

The second reference above suggests that the "Adult Education Agencies" are seen to have a separate existence from the Local Education Councils; the third reference suggests that adult education is to be "provided and co-ordinated" by the Local Education Boards. Lack of clarity is also in evidence in the haphazard use of "regional" and "local" with reference to adult education.

This lack of clarity and systematic exposition is the single greatest difficulty I have with "Partners in Education". It is sloppy in its use of key concepts like "regional" and "local", "decentralise", "democratic" and "community".

What follows by way of response is an attempt to think through systematically the needs of educational administration in Ireland at this time and to present an alternative to the Green Paper which is coherent as well as practical.

HIGHLY CENTRALISED

There is a widespread awareness of the highly centralised nature of Irish public administration in general and of educational administration in partic-

ular. This awareness is expressed in the Policy Statement on the Reform of Local Government:

'...there is need now for change not only in the structures and procedures of local authorities but in the mandate of the local government system, in the tasks assigned to it and the way in which these tasks are to be carried out...'

(Reform of Local Government – Policy Statement, May 1985, page 9).

There is a general consensus also in the view that the aims of administrative reform ought to be:

- (a) 'to bring about greater local authority involvement in the delivery of public sector services in their areas; and
- (b) to increase local authority responsibility and decision-making powers on the principle that services ought to be administered as closely as possible to the consumers'.

(Reform of Local Government – Policy Statement, May 1985, page 15).

It is generally agreed that our high level of centralisation forces Government Departments to deal with an increasing mass of details so that 'the urgent drives out the important, the quality of Government declines and in consequence its authority'.

(T.J. Barrington: 'Regionalisation and Education' *An Muinteoir Naisiunta*, 1984).

EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

The aims of educational administration reform are threefold:

- (i) to improve the efficiency of the education system by easing congestion at the centre,
- (ii) to help create responsible communities and citizens by providing the scope necessary for the exercise of local democracy so as to evoke a local sense of sharing, initiative and commitment; and
- (iii) To make the education system fully relevant to the current and emerging problems of Irish life.

Democratic structures for the administration of education ought to allow participation in a decision-making to those who are affected by the decisions, those with a responsibility for implementing decisions, and those who pay for the services provided.

Under these headings parents and pupils, teachers and education administrators, 'the community' and 'the state', and in so far as they are not already included, taxpayers, have the right to be represented. Democratic institutions rest on the belief in a basic equality among people which ought to be

reflected in our social institutions.

Decentralisation is a means of achieving more democratic social institutions. Appropriate decentralisation leads to greater efficiency and proper accountability.

Accountability in education requires schools and colleges with their administrations, to account for their actions to students, parents and to the community. Public accountability at local level currently exists only in that small sector of the education system administered under the Vocational Education Act, 1930. (About 9% of school-going pupils – primary and post-primary – are in schools operated by V.E.C.'s).

To improve the level of democracy, efficiency and accountability in educational administration it is necessary to examine the role of **National, Regional, County and Local Administration.**

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

Reforms at National Level

It is a matter of some disappointment that possible reforms in educational administration at national level received such little attention in the Green Paper. While acknowledging the potential roles at a national level of the Curriculum and Examinations Board and the National Council of Parents, it is clear that increased democracy, efficiency and accountability require further changes at national level.

The Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924, is the root cause of the centralised nature of educational administration in this state, through the functions it gives the Departments of Education and Finance and through the concept of 'corporation sole' which it enacts. Appropriate amendment to this legislation is required by the changes in the state and its public service. Chapter 3 of the White Paper on the Public Service explores these issues and suggests the kind of legislation required. It is important that the Department of Education develop its proposals for the implementation of these decisions (in the White Paper) and identify how it proposes to manage its policy-making and executive functions.

Apart from the provisions of the Constitution, there is little or no legislation on secondary education since 1878. The latest major piece of legislation is the 1930 Vocational Education Act (apart from legislation relating to third-level education). I therefore contend:

- (i) That a New Education Act is required outlining the role of the Minister and Department of Education in relation to the various sectors of education.
- (ii) that an Oireachtas Standing Committee on Education ought to be established.
- (iii) that National Guidelines for all Levels of Education ought to be agreed by the Oireachtas on the proposal of the Minister for Education at regular intervals, (say every 3 years), and

- (iv) that the practice of publishing an Annual Report from the Department of Education, discontinued in the 1960's, ought to be re-established.

Local Administration

With regard to local administrative areas, units for educational purposes ought to be such that they contribute to the development of social cohesion and a sense of community in Irish Society. This is not possible if there is a proliferation of different regional units for different social services. It is a matter of serious regret that the regional units for education proposed in the Green Paper bear no relationship to the units for other democratic or administrative structures in the state.

County Structures

Though acknowledging some role for a regional structure in education, I suggest that local Government units are the most appropriate for the devolution of responsibility in education. These units, in most cases counties, provided a reasonable basis for developing more democratic, efficient and accountable structures for the administration of education. These units ought to be the location of the major devolved decisions in relation to education and ought to have responsibility for the employment of teaching staff, the allocation of finances and the general development of education and related services in the area.

Functions of County Education Authorities.

The Minister for Education speaking in Tralee identified the major problem being addressed by the proposals in the Green Paper as follows:

We have a system of post-primary schools whose difference structures do not harmonise melodiously. Competition is often a feature of the system where co-operation is required... I have been greatly distressed by the divisions which have shattered communities locked in battles of argument about the relative merits of community schools and colleges... The distinctions centre on issues of control and management where painful power struggles are sometimes acted out which are sometimes in no-one's interests...

The proposals in the Green Paper seek to overcome this problem essentially by eliminating the division between these two types of school...

It would not mean however, the elimination of all differences between schools. The two categories, public and private would remain... To change this would be to tamper with the area of rights guarantee under the constitution... Besides I do not detect any fundamental demand of this character.

(John Marcus O'Sullivan Lecture, Tralee, 1986)

The harmonisation of this discord, the co-ordination of the diffuse sectors of second-level education is a primary objective of the Green Paper proposals. However it appears that the disharmony arises not just from the existence of schools with different management systems but also from the fact that for the majority of schools, (i.e. the private secondary schools), the unit of reference for the decisions is either the individual school or ecclesiastical units. A body at local level with a co-ordinating function in relation to educational provision is required.

Most Irish communities are served by more than one school. A re-organisation which eliminates the differences between community colleges and community schools, while leaving untouched the greater differences between private and public schools, offers little prospect of ending the disharmony created by just these differences.

What is required is a vehicle for the will of the community and democratically elected education authority with the responsibility and the power to co-ordinate educational provision at the local level.

The power to co-ordinate tested in a democratically elected education authority is central to achieving the highly desirable aim of harmony in Irish second-level education.

COMMUNITY STRUCTURES.

I also wish to suggest that the principles of democracy, efficiency and accountability require the existence of a community-based advisory body at the sub-County level to advise the County Authority on the requirements of its locality.

Boards of management of individual schools, Youth Service Committees as well as Adult Education Boards ought to be constituted as sub-committees of the Local Education Authority. Like the Adult Education Organisers Association I see merit in having a number of Adult Education sub-committees in each authority area.

Membership of Local Education Authority and the District Education Advisory Councils ought to be directly elected by universal franchise. The remaining membership would be drawn from parents, teachers and school trustee-interests.

Reformed democratic and decentralised administration structures for education should have responsibility for primary, post-primary, third-level and continuing education. A clear view of the social and educational aims of the reforms is required for the success of administrative or structural reforms in education. Such clarity is not available in the Green Paper.

BARNEY O'REILLY is C.E.O. for the Town of Tralee Vocational Educational Committee. Before taking up this appointment in 1985 he was lecturer in Education at Thomond College, Limerick.

How Distant is Distance Learning?

LIAM BANE

"While the main components of Distance Learning schemes are identical, there are divergent scientific views as to student characteristics, course organisation and the utilisation of various component media or strategies. In some systems the distance learner is regarded as an autonomous individual, who knows independently how to proceed through each learning sequence. A contrary view sees the distance learner not as an autonomous member of a homogenous group but as working amidst the same set of personal variable characteristics and environmental factors as traditional full-time students. According to this latter viewpoint, distance learners need help and guidance in setting goals, planning programmes, defining objectives and sharpening learning skills".

This paragraph is taken from Page 10 of a discussion document issued by N.C.E.A. and entitled "Extending Education Opportunity through NCEA awards by Distance Learning". My first reaction to the quotation is to cull on the person who framed it to come forward so that s/he may be presented with Gobbledygook of the Year Award. The very language that is used here strengthens my suspicions about the direction that Distance Learning is taking at the moment and about the lack of any real debate or discussion and the lack of any attempt at providing proper planning and a policy framework.

Having read two discussion documents issued by the working party on Distance Learning and having listened to some speeches on the topic at the recent AONTAS Conference, I am unhappy about what I am reading and what I am hearing. I may be wrong in the conclusions I have drawn and in the criticisms I am about to offer and if I am, will someone please put me right?

DISTANCE LEARNING FOR MANAGEMENT?

Firstly, it seems to me that underlying whatever discussion there has been to date on Distance Learning is the assumption that this is a matter for the third level institutions to sort out among themselves. It is a debate that must be confined to those who move in that rarefied atmosphere and at that ethereal level and it is a debate about the mechanics of the provision – which institutions is going to have what and how the credits are going to be decided. It would appear to be a reprise of the old game of power and control and certainly one is given the impression that what is important here is Distance Management rather than the Distance Learner. Hence the language of which I have produced a sample and I can only conclude that this is the manner in which people operating at the "higher level" usually employ for the purposes of communicating with each other.

Secondly, the debate has so far been conducted in ignorance of some very important developments in adult education today. One of these, and

perhaps the most significant development in a hidebound education system, is the movement which invited adults to have a real say in their own learning programme, both in the content and in the process. There is a real democratisation taking place here. It must be recognised and the opinions of those involved in it should be sought and carefully considered. Indeed it may be that they will say that Distance Learning is of no great interest or relevance to their immediate needs but what is important is that the people involved should be the ones to make that decision and not have it made for them.

DISTANCE LEARNING FOR WHOM?

It is time, then, to broaden the debate, to discover for a start what exactly we mean by Distance Learning. Are we talking about a narrower concept by which those who wish it may be 'allowed' access to our university system or are we talking about a broader concept which would make learning available to those who are removed from education centres and learning facilities? It seems to me that the former concept is the one under consideration and if 'tis true, 'tis pity because it ignores the contribution being made by daytime education voluntary groups, by self-directed learning groups and the notable progress in the area of adult literacy and adult basic education achieved over the past few years. God knows, any attempt to open up our narrow elitist university system would have to be applauded but, in terms of priorities, the case for the development of basic and second chance education for adults is overwhelming.

Finally, and I would say most urgently, is the need for proceeding in a planned manner. I have to confess that I was somewhat dismayed to hear people in prominent positions in education stating that we might be better off without a plan. Those of us who have been working full-time in the area of adult education at the 'hedge school' level would certainly decry any such haphazard approach. We have had enough of the 'come-day-go-away' 'it'll be alright on the night' approach which has so frustrated the efforts of adult educators in attempting to provide an efficient professional service. Let's be frank and let's stop playing games. We are of course talking about money. Having determined the philosophy which will guide us in the development of a distance learning service, we then need to know if finance is going to be made available and how much? If there is a satisfactory answer forthcoming, then we can proceed to set goals and targets. At least, that way we are aiming at something positive and definite and we will either succeed or fall short. We will thus be spared the sorry sight of communicators searching around for something to baptize — the process by which Ancis is Aris suddenly becomes Distance Learning.

Consultation, real debate and discussion and a planned approach would seem to me to be essential ingredients of what could be a most important educational development. Does anyone want to make a start?

LIAM BANE is Adult Education Organiser for South Co, Dublin and Editor of The Adult Learner.

Book Reviews

PRIORITY AREAS IN ADULT EDUCATION

AONTAS – REPORT SERIES, Price £4.00

For adult educators who wish to make some sense of the often confusing and mutually contradictory demands on their attention this report is essential reading. Aontas has a right to be proud of this first product of its re-constituted Research, Planning and Development sub committee. The report surveys provision in four areas of adult education in Ireland viz. Unemployment and the Unwaged, Women, Adult Basic Education and Rural Community Development.

Besides the inventory of current initiatives in these four areas resulting from the Autumn '85 survey by Dr. Tom Inglis (chapter five), the report contains four informative, stimulating and often challenging chapters covering background, a critical review and reflections on the four above mentioned developmental areas in Adult Education in Ireland today. However the core chapter, to which all the others refer and which informs the thinking of each, is the seminal Chapter Three entitled "A theoretical foundation for Adult Education". Don't let the title put you off – its analysis and the deceptive simplicity with which it distinguishes the three types of learning in Western Society – technical, practical (personal/interpersonal/communication) and emancipatory – has major significance and implications for those of us who seldom have the time, energy or aptitude to stand back from our activities and reflect on what we're about.

Taken as a whole this report (despite its limitations in terms of comprehensiveness, lack of resources and 42% response rate) does what many of us had hoped for from the National Commission Report on Adult Education i.e. it offers a critique of (as opposed to an elevation of incense to) current adult education provision, while at the same time indicating clearly the priority direction for the future. It also offers encouragement to those of us at the coal face – encouragement at the profusion, range and diversity of response of adult educators to disadvantaged groups in our society; restores faith in the often thankless/fruitless task of responding to endless requests for co-operation research surveys and offers hope for the future re-direction of Adult Education within a meaningful theoretical framework.

In some trepidation at drawing the furies of ardent feminists on my head, I must however, before concluding, register (as a mere male) my distaste at the at times stridently aggressive tone of the Women's Studies section of Chapter Four. The gratuitous aggression in the final sentence that self directing women's studies groups "do not need people from above, especially men, to tell them where they have gone wrong" does, I fear, tell us more about the writer than the issue.

In conclusion, this is an excellent report – analytical, informative, readable and stimulating – read it – it could change your life!

EDUCATION FOR UNEMPLOYED ADULTS

Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education,
19b De Montfort St.,
Leicester LE1 7GE
£1.50 sterling.

"But what do you DO all day?" How often this question must be asked of unemployed people, the questioner being at a loss to understand how anyone can live without work as traditionally defined. Many unemployed adults are also at a loss to "put in" the hours, days, weeks...years. Yet they are not flocking in multitudes to our "comprehensive" adult education programmes. What could be wrong with these people?

This book, which is a report commissioned by the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education, bears witness to a strong innovative tradition in adult education. It proceeds to examine the experience of unemployment on an economic, social, psychological and domestic level. It then considers what adult education could be expected to do in response to this state of affairs, perhaps in terms of job skills, personal adjustment and improved quality of life for unemployed people. Initiatives in outreach work and community education are encouraged, replacing deprivation with dignity. Some examples of current provision are described, e.g. maintaining and developing skills, creative activities, understanding unemployment, coping with changed circumstances and basic education. Obstacles to increased provision are identified and ways of removing them suggested.

"All things are possible if the political will is there." The report concludes with the strategy for launching and sustaining a positive campaign to improve the present situation and finally, makes recommendations for national and local action.

For any adult educator interested in making a genuine response to the educational needs of unemployed adults (that category which is largely ignored by most of our youth-centred state sponsored schemes), this book makes compelling reading and should also provide some concrete suggestions as to methods of approach. Current practices in the administration of adult educational programmes — enrolling, registration, fees, etc. — must be reviewed so that they may facilitate rather than frustrate the education of unemployed people.

Kathleen Forde

LEARNING LIBERATION

WOMEN'S RESPONSE TO MEN'S EDUCATION

Learning Liberation
Women's Response to Men's Education
by Jane Thompson
Croom Helm Ltd.
Provident House, Burrell Row,
Beckenham, Kent BR3 1AT
£8.95 sterling

Ask anyone at random for their definition of Feminism or Women's Lib, and you will get the whole spectrum of replies, from the most entrenched prejudice to perhaps an enthusiastic support of the Women's Movement. Jane Thompson leaves the reader of this book in no doubt as to her definition of Feminism: "...the refusal to sell our talents and our aspirations short simply to avoid conflict and confrontation, to practice disobedience to the rules and regulations devised by men which define our subordination...sustained by the responsibility we have to each other to keep on fighting for as long as any of us remains unfree." This approach forms the basis of the argument throughout this challenging and daring book.

Patriarchal structures and attitudes are analysed with a freshness and honesty that compels the reader to accept the author's persuasive argument for a woman-centred philosophy of learning in direct conflict to our traditional white, middle-class, man-made educational provision.

The inescapable necessity of making our own knowledge runs like a leit-motif throughout the book's eleven chapters which include: "The Politics of Women's Subordination," "Women's Studies as an Alternative Model in Adult Education," and "Liberation, Now or Never?" It is in the process of making our own knowledge that Adult Education will be transformed, and we will learn how to empower ourselves.

Jane Thompson's theories are both thought-provoking and disturbing and it is difficult to remain complacent in confronting them. She also supports these theories with many examples of Second Chance for Women programmes at Southampton University, where she is involved. Women are learning liberation against considerable odds, such as the oppressive sexism of much of Adult Education. Learning liberation, however, has never and can never be a merely intellectual affair, but must be linked to forms of personal action and public campaigns. Hence, this book is dedicated to "strong women and those of us who are becoming stronger."

Read it.

Kathleen Ford

LET'S MAKE FRIENDS

Human Horizons Series – Jodie Walsh

“Handicapped people are their own best envoys” and this book is a refreshing demonstration of the value of a positive approach. At the outset, the author gives a brief history of the development of attitudes towards mental handicap and shows how we have moved, or are moving slowly, from the situation in which mentally handicapped people were isolated to the more positive and sensible approach of helping to integrate them into normal everyday living.

This book is concerned mainly with describing two schemes which encourage others to invite mentally handicapped people to share their way of life for a time. One is the **Friendship Scheme** in which a mentally handicapped adult is befriended by volunteers who live in the area. The project was subjected to a very close critical examination and was carefully monitored and the results are given here in great detail.

The second scheme, entitled **Break Away**, is aimed at mentally handicapped children, who are hosted by volunteer families for a two-week period. This has a three-fold purpose – firstly, it offers the child an opportunity to develop outside the area of special care; secondly, it gives the child's own family a chance to relax and go on holiday and thirdly, it serves to educate the host families on the question of mental handicap and attitudes towards it.

Apart from outlining these schemes in great detail, the book is bursting with ideas as to how mentally handicapped people may be facilitated in breaking out of their world of loneliness and isolation. The book is short on sermonising and more concerned with practical examples of how all of us can assist in the process. And for adult educators, there is a question; Have you ever thought of including mentally handicapped people in your classes?

My only criticism is one of presentation, as the senses are sometimes dulled by the bombardment of information and I lost my way once or twice in the middle of questionnaires, reactions, quotations, and conclusions.

But this is a valuable book and it is to be hoped that the pioneering work of Jodie Walsh and her colleagues will receive the support it so richly deserves.

Liam Bane

WRITE UP YOUR STREET

Women's Community Press
44 East Essex St.,
Dublin 2
01-712149
IR£3.95

One of the most wide-spread and exciting developments in Adult Education in recent years has been the mushrooming of Writing Groups all around the country. Nothing "high falutin" but "ordinary" people writing about "ordinary" happenings. And yet isn't it the so-called ordinary things in life that strike us as most extraordinary, like getting drenched on a camping trip, being evicted at gun-point, learning to read as an adult, or being totally frustrated in the Social Welfare Exchange?

This anthology of short stories, poems, autobiography and local history bears eloquent testimony to the work of some thirteen writing groups, as well as writers from among the travelling people and adult literacy groups. It tells the stories of people who have not previously made their voices heard. The style of writing is varied and fresh as is the wide range of personalities telling their tales.

The book is published by Women's Community Press whose aim is "to open up the print medium to people and groups who are denied access to it — those who are more often written about than given the opportunity to speak for themselves."

Kathleen Forde

DUBLIN LIVES

Dublin Lives tells the stories of Dublin people who attend the Northside Reading and Writing Centre in Coolock. It hopes to change the stereotyped view that society has of people who have a reading problem. The following review was written by James Robinson:

I feel that **Dublin Lives** is for people who have left school many years ago with a limited education in writing, reading and spelling. It is for people who never got a chance to get on in life, it also helps people to understand one another. I feel that by reading **Dublin Lives** you can get a great understanding of what people are like. In a sense, it is the history of how people work their way in life, both at home and in school. I find that you could not change the content of these stories because they are about peoples' life history which could never be changed. The only way that **Dublin Lives** could be improved is by our education authorities starting to read what people are saying about their education, past and present. I feel that the content of this journal is very special in helping people to understand what happened to them.

The three issues of **Dublin Lives** published so far are available from:

Rose Jackson

Northside Reading and Writing Group

Colaiste Dhulaigh, Coolock,

Dublin 5

Cost: £1 each copy.

The Fountain

The Fountain Writers' Group
Dundrum, Dublin 14.
01-954048.

Talk From the Towers

Ballymun Publishing Group
c/o Maria Ui Chleirigh
17 Country Gardens
Ballymun, Dublin 11.
01-425621

The Quill

Finglas Writing Group
c/o The Spanish Convent
Finglas Road
Dublin 11.

Among the Leaves

Coolock Writers' Group
c/o Ann Mulhall
93 Ardmore Drive
Artane, Dublin 5.
01-474982

Each of these four books was published by a local writing group in Dublin and represents, in a very concrete manner, the ultimate outcome of the groups' work. Through these various collections of short stories, articles and poetry, the groups have shown a wonderful resilience, and determination to move the mountains they encountered in their path, by their fund-raising, organising, time, child-minding, illustrations, time, proof-reading and more time.

What prompts such commitment? What, but a burning desire to communicate through the written word, to express a creative and artistic ability that refuses to lie dormant. The reader will be touched by the disarming simplicity and freshness of style and content in the various stories which cover the whole spectrum of human experiences.

Kathleen Forde

THE ADULT LEARNER 1986

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D. Ni hEgcartaigh, Runai, Loreto Convent, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.	10.00
Br. J.M. Fahy, Principal, St. Josephs, Fairview, Dublin 3.	5.00
Sr. Della Finn, Ard Scoil Mhuire, Presentation Convent, Sexton Street, Limerick.	10.00
C. Clancy, A.E.O., Vocational School, Kilkenny Road, Carlow.	5.00

A. Ryan, Marino Vocational School, Marino, Dublin 3.	5.00
L. O'Murcheartaigh, C.E.O., Co. Tipperary V.E.C., Church Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary.	10.00
E. Hartley, A.E.O., Waterford V.E.C., Town Hall, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.	10.00
Co. Wexford V.E.C., Vocational School, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford	10.00
T. Doyle, C.D.V.E.C., Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.	10.00
P. Nally, A.E.O., Vocational School, Cullies, Cavan.	5.00
P. Moroney, Vocational School, Rosanna Road, Tipperary.	10.00
A. O'Donoghue, A.E.O., St. Finians Community College, Swords, Co. Dublin.	5.00
M. Carroll, A.E.O., Co. Monaghan V.E.C., Beech Hill, Monaghan.	5.00
L. Warren, A.E.O., Co. Dublin V.E.C., Main Road, Tallaght, Co. Dublin.	5.00
S. O'Lochlainn, C.E.O., Co. Westmeath V.E.C., Bridge House, Bellevue Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.	10.00
J. O'Hanlon, Bush Post-Primary School, Riverstown, Dundalk, Co. Louth	10.00
S. O'Longain, C.E.O., Co. Donegal V.E.C., Pearse Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	15.00
S. Reynolds, C.E.O., Town of Bray V.E.C., Technical School, Florence Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow.	10.00
S. Conlon, A.E.O., Vocational School, Ennis Road, Co. Clare.	5.00
The Principal, Graignamanagh Vocational School, Co. Kilkenny.	5.00
G. Smith, Vocational School, Banagher, Co. Offaly V.E.C., Co. Offaly.	10.00
K. Lyons, C.E.O., City of Waterford V.E.C., 30 The Mall, Waterford.	10.00
S. MacCartain, C.E.O., Co. Offaly V.E.C., O'Connor Square, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.	10.00
L. Arundel, C.E.O., C.D.V.E.C., Town Hall, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.	10.00
F. Goulding, A.E.O., Co. Dublin V.E.C., Main Road, Tallaght, Co. Dublin.	5.00
The Principal, Plunkett School, Swords Road, Whitehall, Dublin 9.	10.00
P. Finn, School of Commerce, Mulgrave Street, Limerick.	10.00
G. O'Dwyer, School of Commerce & Domestic Science, Morrison's Island, Cork.	10.00
R. Rice, C.E.O., Co. Laois Vocational Education Committee, Ridge Road, Portlaoise.	10.00
M. O'Lionain, C.E.O., Dun Laoghaire V.E.C., Eblana Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.	10.00
N. Carroll, College of Commerce, Dundrum, Dublin 16.	5.00
P. O'Abhartailgh, Administrative Offices, The Hynes Building, Galway.	10.00
Co. Dublin V.E.C., Main Road, Tallaght, Dublin 24	10.00
The Principal, Dundrum College, Dublin 14.	10.00
D.A.T.E., c/o College of Commerce, Dundrum, Dublin 14.	5.00
The Principal, Stillorgan Vocational School, Co. Dublin.	10.00
P. Burke, Business Administration Services, 9 Ashleigh Rose, Skehard Road, Blackrock, Cork.	5.00
Dawson Limited, Cannon House, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5EE, England.	10.00
J. Dunleavy, Department of Education, Hawkins House, Dublin 2.	5.00
Sr. Teresa Daly, Secretary, Institute of Education, Mount Oliver, Dundalk, Co. Louth.	10.00
M. O'Flynn, Holy Spirit Girls National School, Ballymun, Dublin 11.	5.00
M. O'Murchu, Bord Na Gaeilge, 7 Cearnog Mhuirfean, Baile Atha Cliath 2.	5.00
D. Bates, 54 Finian Park, Shannon, Co. Clare	5.00
J. O'Dwyer, Manager, Personnel Centre, E.S.B., 75-79 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2.	10.00

Fr. Pelly, 135 North Circular Road, Dublin 7.	10.00
A. Ryan, 29 Maynooth Road, Celbridge, Co. Kildare.	5.00
P. Murphy, Administration Assistant, Department of Adult Education, University College, Cork.	5.00
Fr. M. Keane, 52 Orwell Park, Templeogue, Dublin 12.	5.00
J. Creed, Director, An Glanán, Termonfeckin, Co. Louth.	10.00
L. Bane, A.E.O., College of Commerce, Main Street, Dundrum, Dublin 14.	5.00
T. Downes, A.E.O., Blanchardstown Vocational School, Main Street, Blanchardstown, Co. Dublin.	5.00
K. Forde, A.E.O., Colaiste Dhulaigh, Clonsaugh Road, Coolock, Dublin 5.	5.00
M. Riordan, A.E.O., Administrative Offices, 2 Eblana Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.	5.00
J. Marsden, A.E.O., Administrative Offices, Vocational School, Abbey Road, Navan, Co. Meath.	5.00
J. Barry, A.E.O., Vocational School, Battery Road, Longford.	5.00
M. Fox, A.E.O., Old Vocational School, Mountcharles Road, Donegal Town.	5.00
C. Geraghty, A.E.O., Technical Institute, Cambridge Road, Ringsend, Dublin 4.	5.00
F. Hannon, Chairman, Foroige, National Youth Development Organisation, Irish Farm Centre, Bluebell, Dublin 12.	5.00
P. Dalton, Accounts Office, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.	10.00
National Adult Literacy Agency, 14 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2.	10.00
The Principal, Vocational School, Sydenham Road, Dundrum, Dublin 14.	10.00
P. Gallagher, Donogh O'Malley R.T.C., Port Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.	10.00
Sr. A. Madden, St. Mary's Secondary School, Convent of Mercy, Newport Co. Tipperary.	5.00
Fr. Leo Mohan, Pobalscoil, Chloich Cheannfhaola, An Falcarrach, Tir Chonaill.	10.00
R. Webster, Director, Aontas, 14 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2.	10.00
B. Gallagher, Co. Dublin V.E.C., Main Road, Tallaght.	10.00
V. Black, Principal, Blakestown Community School, Blakestown, Co. Dublin.	10.00