

Without doubt the development of an environmental topic such as this provides extensive coverage of core subject attainment targets in a meaningful and lively way. Nevertheless, the implementation of a successful and relevant topic is insufficient to ensure coherence and progression of National Curriculum delivery across a school year or throughout a school. The need for teachers to consider an overall school policy and framework for delivery of all subjects - environmental education not least among them - is now substantial and should be viewed as INSET priority.

### The present need

Throughout the past year, we have seen a massive increase in INSET activities almost all relating to the core subjects and to matters of assessment and testing. It is my hope that in its wake there will be equal attention paid to cross-curricular issues. As far as environ-

mental education is concerned, first and foremost must be familiarisation with the location of it as a cross-curricular theme of the National Curriculum and with the specific documentation concerning the teaching and learning of its particular knowledge, understanding and skills. It is also my hope that in-service education will go beyond this basic minimum and give due attention to a proper location of environmental education in relation to the whole curriculum framework and the context of children's learning. Environmental education *must* be viewed as part of a coherent whole - perhaps the basis of it - rather than as an isolated element or appendage of 'yet another subject to be added on'.

Our area of learning has been well established on the curriculum map of primary schools in this country for three decades. Throughout this time, local authorities and national bodies

have done a tremendous amount to promote its importance; yet now perhaps more than ever before there is a need for the development of effective teaching and learning strategies. School based in-service work is of paramount importance but there is no doubt that college of education and university departments of education must have a key role to play in making provision for INSET programmes of environmental education that take account of both content and context.

### References

- 1 Palmer J A, 'Framework for Opportunity - The location of Environmental Education As A Cross-Curricular Issue', *Environmental Education* Summer 1989 Journal of The National Association for Environmental Education.
- 2 National Curriculum Council, Curriculum Guidance 1: A Framework For the Primary Curriculum, 1989. ■

consumerism has re-emerged as part of the current wave of environmentalism<sup>3</sup>. There are profits in the environment for some branches of capital, and manufacturers and retailers have not been slow to realize the possibilities of green consumerism in markets nearing saturation. While some of their claims have prompted Friends of the Earth to revisit the concept of 'ecopornography' (exploiting green concern) introduced in the earlier consumers' guide, it is the deeper contradictions thrown up by green consumerism which point to its educational potential.

### The treadmill of production and consumption

In a classic text of modern environmentalism, Allan Schnaiberg<sup>4</sup> explains why the analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from social structures of economic and political power. The pre-occupations of some environmentalists with population growth, resource scarcity, inappropriate technology, or consumer affluence, are misplaced. The fundamental cause of environmental problems lies in forms of economic production and development determined by small minorities with considerable power. Their decisions shape economic development which then shapes population levels, resource use, technological innovation, and patterns of consumption. Any genuine attempt to resolve environmental problems should therefore focus on the democratization of social structures so that the majority are able to realize their common interest in sustainable development and greater social justice.

Schnaiberg describes the accelerating treadmill of production and consumption which formed the foundation of post-war social democracy in countries like Britain. In the interest of capital accumulation or profits, workers, firms, and governments were all sold an ever expanding range of wants and these were satisfied

## Green consumerism - exploring the contradictions

*John Huckle argues that behind the new wave of green consumerism lie deeper social questions that have educational implications.*

Few of our pupils or students can fail to have noticed that 1988/89 saw the re-launch of green consumerism in new and persuasive wrappings. They will have noticed the advertisements for lead free petrol, CFC free aerosols, and other 'environmentally friendly' products, . . . will have watched a succession of media personalities imploring them to join the green consumer revolution, . . . will have noticed some small changes at the supermarket, . . . and may have sat through lessons which, directly or indirectly, blamed them for such environmental problems

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as the destruction of the rainforests or global warming.

Some of their teachers will be old enough to remember Jonathan Holliman's *Consumers' Guide to the Protection of the Environment*<sup>1</sup>, published in 1971. Like the current bestselling *Green Consumer Guide*<sup>2</sup>, this offered background information on environmental problems and their links with consumerism. It provided

advice on 'environmentally friendly' products, and suggested strategies whereby individuals could 'change to a way of life more related to the ability of the environment to support our real needs'. Green consumerism was at that time a minority interest amongst more radical environmentalists. It was not significantly co-opted by manufacturers and retailers and it faded from view as the economic recession, of the late 1970s and early 1980s, introduced new concerns.

With the upturn in the economy, and renewed prosperity for some, green

by ever more wasteful and damaging production. The treadmill was not without its benefits but in seeking to delay the onset of economic and political limits in growth, its controllers hastened the approach of ecological limits in a way which earlier environmentalists had predicted. Consumer society delays market saturation and keeps the voters happy, but we are now more aware of the untold damage it does to countless people and environments around the world<sup>5</sup>.

The treadmill lost momentum for a time during the world recession but is now picking up speed again. Its productive forces have been significantly restructured in the past ten years and in Britain this has resulted in significant social and environmental change. There has been an attack on the protection provided by the welfare state, the emergence of new environmental problems linked to the enterprise economy, and a renewed emphasis on individual materialism. Mrs Thatcher's government has used tax cuts, credit, and consumerism to maintain its support but with manufacturing industry largely gone, its policies have precipitated a balance of payments crisis and high interest rates.

### The five 'R's point to a green economy

The nature of the treadmill means that attempts to green the economy or patterns of consumption will inevitably raise contradictions unless they transform its underlying logic. During the past year, Sandy Irvine has highlighted the contradictions associated with green consumerism both in an article in *The Ecologist*<sup>6</sup>, and in a letter to *The Guardian*<sup>7</sup>. In his view, it focuses attention on producing and consuming better rather than on producing and consuming differently and less. It diverts attention away from the need for global resource redistribution to enable sustainable development in the South, and it

perpetuates the values of consumer society rather than advancing an ethic of sufficiency and greater self-reliance. A truly green consumerism would, in Irvine's view, reflect the five 'R's. It would *refuse* unnecessary goods and services and would be committed to *reduction*, *reuse*, *repair*, and *recycling*.

In line with Schnaiberg's emphasis on social structures, Irvine also reminds us that there are real limits to what individual consumers can achieve. Putting different goods in our shopping basket may result in worthwhile changes but much of our consumption is determined for us by those with economic and political power. The government's obsession with road building and private transport is one example. An increasing number of people do not have the option of giving up their cars and opting for the bus, train, or tram.

Environmental problems can therefore only be resolved by transforming the treadmill and replacing it with a democratically planned green economy driven by radically different imperatives. There are several guides to how such an economy might work<sup>8</sup> and these stress the value of such innovations as decentralisation, appropriate technology, workers' co-operatives, arms conversion, resource taxes, job sharing, and a guaranteed basic incomes for all. Establishing socially useful and ecologically sustainable forms of production and development will require considerable political struggle. This is taking place on numerous sites within society; including schools and classrooms.

### What We Consume

In 1984, the World Fund for Nature established its 'Global Environmental Education Programme'. I was asked to co-ordinate a module, *What We Consume*, which would allow pupils to examine the goods and services they consume and their links with environment and development issues around the world. Five of the

module's ten units are now published<sup>9</sup>, together with the Teachers' Handbook, and they represent an attempt to establish a more socially useful form of environmental education in our schools. They also provide considerable scope for exploring the contradictions associated with green consumerism.

### *It is the deeper contradictions thrown up by the green consumerism which point to its educational potential.*

*What We Consume* provides a curriculum framework and classroom activities for teachers wishing to explore the social causes of environmental problems and possible solutions. One hundred original activities, in ten units, link pupils as consumers to economies and societies around the world. They enable them to study different forms of development and underdevelopment, recognise the impact that these have on nature and the environment, and consider alternatives which are more ecologically sustainable. The activities are designed to investigate key ideas, using key questions and concepts, and these continually focus pupils' attention on social structures and processes. In this way the module develops economic awareness and political literacy within the context of environment and development issues, and also gives prominence to groups which link sustainable development to an extension of democracy.

The module's rationale is fully explained within the Teachers' Handbook. Its chapters explain why environmental education should be regarded as social education. They also provide teachers with an overview of society and nature in the contemporary world and a selection of readings chosen to provoke reflection on the teaching of

environment and development issues in schools. The module's units sample the main concerns of the World and UK Conservation Strategies and the main forms of political economy found in the modern world. In addition to activities and copyright free activity sheets, they also include articles, photographs, cartoons, and a photoset. I would be interested to learn of *Annual Review* readers' views of the module and of how it is being used in schools.

### The struggle for socially useful education

The development of *What We Consume* has not been free from tensions and problems and these may, one day, form the basis of another article. For the moment, it is sufficient to mention that the work continues and that Unit 3, *Our Consumer Society* is my current pre-occupation. The relaunch of green consumerism has therefore come at an appropriate time and the Unit's activities will explore some of the contradictions outlined above. They will also examine the desirability of green socialist alternatives to present forms of production and consumption and in this way, seek to advance socially useful production in our schools.

Just as green consumerism raises questions about what constitutes 'environmentally friendly' production and consumption, so an emphasis upon environmental issues within the science or geography National Curriculum raises questions about what constitutes 'environmentally friendly' schooling. Current developments in both sites throw up contradictions to explore and generate the space within which we can advance critical forms of environmental education. If you are sympathetic to my argument, I hope you will have a look at *What We Consume*.

### References

- 1 Holliman J, *Consumers' Guide to the Protection of the Environment*, Pan/Ballantine, 1971.

2 Elkington J, and Hailes J, *The Green Consumer Guide*, Gollanz, 1988.

3 Green consumerism has resulted in numerous guides and magazines including:

Christensen K, *Home Ecology*, Arlington, 1989.

Seymour J & Giradet H, *Blueprint for a Green Planet*, Dorling Kindersley, 1987.

*Ethical Consumer*, ECRA Publishing Ltd., 100 Gretney Walk, Moss Side, Manchester, M15 5ND.

*New Consumer*, 52 Elswick Rd., Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 6JH.

4 Schnaiberg A, *The Environment: from Surplus to Scarcity*, OUP, 1980.

5 Trainer T, *Abandon Affluence*, Zed Books, 1985.

Trainer T, *Developed to Death*, Green print, 1988.

Seabrook J, *The Race for Riches*, Green print, 1988.

6 Irvine S, 'Consuming Fashions? The Limits of Green Consumerism', *The Ecologist*, 19/3,

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7 Irvine S, 'Five 'R's: an order of priorities for green consumerism', letter to 7, 2.10.89.

8 Hodgson G, *The Democratic Economy*, Penguin, 1984.

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Dauncey G, *After the Crash: the Emergence of the Rainbow Economy*, Greenprint, 1988.

9 *What We Consume* is published by The Richmond Publishing Company and can be

ordered from WWF-UK Education Distribution, c/o The Richmond Publishing Co Ltd, PO Box 963, Slough SL2 3RS.

In addition to co-ordinating 'What We Consume', John Huckle is the author of 'Consuming Interests', a unit in a course on environmental issues to be jointly published by NALGO and the National Extension College in 1990. ■

## Educational developments and environmental education

### Environmental education in an ERA of change - plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose

*Brian Lee reviews the implications of the Education Reform Act on environmental education - and is undaunted.*

For those who embody beliefs in a 'mission', change represents a challenge which demands a corresponding change of tactics and, some may suggest, a change of beliefs. But I suggest that the mission and the message of those concerned to promote environmental education are the same as ever. The responsibilities of those who prepare the young to 'inherit the earth' - and the entitlements of those who will inherit - are not changed by legislative, administrative or organisational circumstances. Nor are they changed by increased awareness of the urgency of environmental issues.

The insecurity often associated with change is overcome only if we are able to reaffirm our beliefs and recommit our energies to the mission.

This paper seeks to address some of the changes affecting

the delivery of environmental education in the formal sector of education. (We should not forget that there is much to be done in adult education.)

#### The ERA of change - the Education Reform Act

A school curriculum is the sum of all the learning experiences provided, wittingly or unwittingly, by the school. The National Curriculum will become part of those learning experiences and need not be a threat to a proper programme of environmental education.

Management is about enabling. In the school context it is about encouraging, resourcing and supporting people in the delivery of an appropriate curriculum. The move to Local Management of Schools (LMS) will not in itself impose constraints on environmental education - those managers already committed to EE will see enhanced

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opportunities; those not committed represent a challenge to the EE lobby but, in its nature, this is not a new challenge.

#### The National Curriculum

There is nothing wrong with the concept of a National Curriculum. (Environmental) education in its broadest sense is founded upon basic skills, understandings, and attitudes. Specialist disciplines (subjects) provide insight and impose rigour onto more advanced learning.

In basic and advanced learning the environment provides the medium and, often, the message. Why do we

need to talk? Why are attitudes important? Why do we need skills? In all subjects, a teacher's work is made easier if it is related to the environment - the world in which children live abounds with examples, analogies and experiences which make music, English, mathematics, technology, art and so on relevant, important and exciting.

Good managers will subsume a National Curriculum within the total curriculum and will still see the promotion of healthy relationships and interactions as the core. Attainment targets have always been used. Standardising, publicising and misrepresenting their significance may be the subject of justifiable concern but teachers will know that learning achievements result from relevant, meaningful teaching delivered in a wholesome social context.

The environmental education



## What We Consume - A Global Environmental Education Programme

John Huckle, World Wide Fund for Nature, Richmond Publishing Company, 1989.

*What We Consume* is an environmental education project which could be of major importance. The scope is of global proportions linking issues of the environment with development, poverty and international inequality. There are a large number of classroom activities for teachers to use, taking as a starting point the products we consume in Britain and then tracing back the issues involved.

The project is sensibly designed for flexible use within the 11-16 age range, particularly in the Humanities and Social Studies curriculum, but it could find other applications in schools. The material is divided into 10 separate units, each with original activities. The first three units provide an introduction to the use we make of nature, within the context of the world economy and Britain's changing role. There are then five units each concerned with particular countries or products and the related environmental issues. These include farming and the countryside in the UK, the Brazilian Amazon and the destruction of tropical rain forests, Ethiopia in relation to aid and desertification, the Soviet Union and the arms race and pollution, and education and urbanisation in China. There are two further units, one dealing with multilateral action over environmental issues, both within regional blocks of countries such as the EEC and at a global level; the other addresses links between environmental concerns with the struggles for self-reliance and democracy around the world.

An important resource is the teachers' handbook which accompanies the units. Here the philosophy and possible approaches are elaborated. There are also a considerable number

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of readings which are intended to promote reflection and informed discussion - particularly during initial and in-service training sessions. These are an important feature of the project but if they are to be used effectively in the way intended, it is essential that tutors or group leaders are selective and prepare thoroughly.

Teachers who want a ready-made package that they can take into the classroom to use directly will be disappointed. A good deal of further work and preparation is needed to put the approaches into effect. Also the challenge of the new National Curriculum will add considerable complications. This raises questions about the curriculum framework that is claimed in the introduction but is not related to important national developments in education at present.

In the context of the important issues raised in this project the task before the teacher is eminently worthwhile - if difficult - and the materials provided here for those who wish to move away from didactic approaches and to stimulate thought and discussion in class are without doubt exciting.

*The Teachers' Handbook* £7.95. The units are £9.95 each. The units reviewed were: 'Society and Nature'; 'UK Agriculture', 'Brazil', 'China'. ■

## Streetwise - the Magazine of Urban Studies: Issue No 1 Autumn 1989

Published by the National Association for Urban Studies from the Lewis Cohen Urban Studies Centre, Brighton Polytechnic, BN2 2JY. £10 00 for 4 issues.

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The National Association for Urban Studies, recently resurrected out of the demise of the Council for Urban Studies Centres, has got off to a flying start with this first issue of its quarterly bulletin, *Streetwise*, replacing CUSC's *BEE*. The objectives of the new magazine are, 'to provide information and analysis which reflects the wide-ranging concerns of urban studies. (It) will present practical ideas for teaching and project work, as well as examining innovative practice by architects, planners, local authorities and other organisations with an educative role'. The front cover carries an illustration for a 'Box of Delights' project about primary-secondary school liaison; and this theme characterises the whole magazine which is delightfully produced, a delight to read, and a delight to welcome to environmental education journalism!

It is packed with thought-provoking, and teaching orientated articles, as well as pithy book reviews. In particular Nick Jones' article 'Urban

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Studies and the National Curriculum' is a necessary read. In addition, there is a most useful 'Directory of Urban Studies Supplement' giving full details of thirty working centres throughout Britain. Such a widespread number is welcome evidence of the viability of the urban studies movement, and a tribute to all those enthusiasts involved in running urban studies centres - too often on inadequate resources. So if Issue No 1 is a foretaste of things to come out of the wing of NAUS then the urban studies movement is about to make another great leap forward. Thus this magazine is essential reading for teachers and environmental professionals, keen to help students in schools and colleges, as well as members of the adult community, to take part in making their built surroundings a better place to live in! ■

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## Stark

Ben Elton, Sphere Books Limited, 1989, £3.50

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After years of pouring pollutants into the seas and atmosphere the Earth has finally reached TTO - Total Toxic Overload. Temperatures are soaring, crops are failing; the effects are irreversible. In Western Australia, a group of the world's most influential and powerful businessmen conceive of the richest and most disgusting conspiracy in history to extricate themselves. Ranged against them are EcoAction - an assortment of

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disenfranchised Aborigines, ageing hippies, a journalist and a Pommie poseur, determined to expose their appalling scheme.

This is the setting of Ben Elton's novel, a brilliant and witty commentary on our inability to come to terms with