

The Federation of

Worker Writers & Community

Publishers

federation

magazine



... Getting **A** life?
Oh-Boy, did I ever!

£2

v17

Summer

99

● Festival Diaries

● Festival Book Bag

● Festival Photos

● Gladys McGee

● Yes we are still Worker Writers!

● Kensington Welfare Rights Union, USA

● Book Reviews

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THE
ARTS
COUNCIL
OF ENGLAND

The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers

- We are an umbrella organisation for writers groups and publishers who wish to share their skills and work with their communities.
- We were formed in 1976, and now have a Membership of over fifty independently organised writers' workshops, community publishers and organisations in Britain and around the World.
- We aim to further working class writing and community publishing, our Members share a belief that writing and publishing should be made accessible to all.
- We publish this magazine, a Broadsheet of writing and a regular Newsletter; we run an annual Festival of Writing; organise training; develop networks; encourage people to express themselves, and much much more!

For Membership of the FWWCP contact the address below. Membership is for groups only, but individuals can take an important role by becoming a Friend of the Fed.

We would like to hear from you

By post: The FWWCP, 67 The Boulevard, Tunstall,
Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6BD

By e-mail: fwwcp@cwcom.net

This magazine plus many previous issues are available on our Website: <http://www.fwwcp.mcmail.com>

The next two deadlines for submission of articles or reviews for consideration for this magazine are: 24 September 1999 and 28 January 2000, send copy to the address above, preferably on disk. Send books for review asap.

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Feditorial

Heeley Writers finally got around to holding its first AGM this year... the group has been running for 19 years. In Any Other Business, someone asked - what do we get from being in this Federation then?

"Well, there's the Festival, the magazine, newsletter broadsheet, training days, networking with other writing and publishing groups. Some of the courses are far cheaper than you might pay elsewhere, we keep costs down through voluntary work."

"But what do we get?"

Jo Stanley* writes "... oh the pleasure... of the annual conferences of the Fed - coach trips to it, the noisy meals at it, the dancing and readings at its Saturday nights. They offer collectivity and reassurance that being working-class does not mean being a piece of trodden offal. In these cases it means mouthily and creatively uttering statements (often of wit and precision) that illustrate class experience and shatter the silences." Write on.

*To Celeb-rate and Not Be-moan, pp175-189 Class Matters, Mahony and Zmroczek (eds), Taylor and Francis, 1997

Nick Pollard - Editor

1999 Festival Diaries

Every Year in April
the Federation of
Worker Writers
and Community
Publishers stages its
Festival of
Writing.
A chance for old
and new friends
to get together,
hear each others'
work, exchange
publications
and catch up on
developments, to
write and read.
It's also a time
of reaffirmation
of our voices, as
worker writers
and community
publishers, as
witnesses to our
experiences and
as documentors
and guides to our
histories. If you
missed it then read
on...

A La Prochaine...

"Hullo, thingmi ...!"

"... eh ..., hi ... it's ... !?"

"Yes- 's'ME... 'member ...?"

And funnily enough, you do ... recall an incident, a place, a time ... that person who ...

OH!-HER/HE?

YOU-YES.

That's the fun ... made even better when you actually do recall Peter, Pauline, Mary, Anthony and ... well - 4 out of 100 is not a bad start, eh?

(Here's a wee tip - "What's your name again?" "Michelle Alsager"

"Yes, I knew it was Michelle,

it was the Alsager I forgot," (Easi-peasi)

Anyway, the badges help ... all these wee badgers from their own poetic setts, insisting that they are not bored by your epic "How I became a writer in 99 easy lessons (yawn!)" "Oh, really oh (yawnzz) real - eh? Re-(yupp)-ALLY.

Fed-Fest

*STAGLAIRE-ED BACK

And so ('midst snow and dreich drizzle) ... (and that was just the bus journey) ...

Scotia welcomed back an FWWCP-er back to -

REALITY.

"Cloud-cuckoo Land"

"Castle in the air"

"Island Mentality"

"Detached"

"Not quite real life" ... was Alsager - but, thank goodness for that. Getting away from normalities' pressure, stress, family or whatever ... getting back into a like-minded family of "screivers" (Scots for writers), meeting old friends ... sorry, mature(ish) friends whom I had only met for the first time last year was full of wonder.

Wonderful.

Getting a life?

Oh-Boy, did I ever!

It is inspirational to see so many differed persons from so many differed situations from so many differed cities, towns, villages, hamlets ... it is exhilarating. Too good, at times.

For two (Anne Daniel and I) from a very rural background ...

HEY! Alsager was a veritable metropolis. (Look, there's more than 10 streets here. It must be very big. Massive.) Originally



I came from Glasgow but I have now lived in Dumfries and Galloway for 15 years and I am well adjusted. Well, "adjusted" is maybe the wrong word for me ... the area fits around me like a velvet glove. Soft. Caressing. I've actually forgotten what big conurbations feel like. I don't get so many opportunities to meet with such diverse groupings. That for me is one of the FED's success points - just how to realise those forgotten opportunities. Another is the safety aspect. The FED-FEST celebratory readings let me operate, perform, experiment in a safe environment. That in itself encourages, lifts, eggs on to greater effort.

And now ...?

And now I am on the Exec. HEY! Effort? Easy that is not going to be. Whilst I felt pride at people wishing to vote for a comparative newcomer and stranger (or strange newcomer, com-paratively speaking, if you prefer), I felt awe at my first (brief) Exec. meeting on Sunday morning

(not long after a nightly dose of "social interaction"). The breadth and scope of what has to be done is enormous. I will try to fulfil your investment in me. That is a promise. Achievement will be something else altogether.

However, achievement is something I was glad to achieve at my hastily cobbled together

"Illustrating Your Words" workshop. That was both fun and hard work and I was mentally drained after it. But as I've always said, groups give me much more than I give them. Thanks

to all my fellow and fellow-ess illustrators. I will do a more properly prepared workshop next year. That is a promise I can keep and will achieve.

And, at last - to all whom I did not socially interact with ...

"À la prochaine"

as Bernard will say (to the next time)

Eric D Davidson

*Bernard from CREAMI says we are all "Stagiaires" (students)

Two Different Years

To be honest, I had never heard of Alsager and, to be even more honest (how honest can you get?) last year, I had never heard of Bretton Hall either.

I was very impressed then, when we arrived at what looked to me like a miniature Chatsworth House. The country house in its landscaped grounds looked handsome and, to my delight, right next door was the Yorkshire Sculpture Park with the renowned work of Henry Moore. One of my favourite mornings was to see the new lambs sitting very unconcerned, on sculptures which appear all over the world.

The bluebell wood was another pleasure and I was very intrigued to see a young



boy dashing about on his bike, and later learned that it was Keevin who had come across from France with his printing father.

The weekend whizzed past, though we did find the campus rather spread out - with the student bar about the furthest away.

Booking again this year, I wondered if I would be assigned to Lucy's room as I was last year - but no. When we arrived at Alsager it was obvious that it was no country seat, but a (?) 1970's college style set of buildings. The big advantage was that it was compact, particularly with the Atrium area.

Here was the Buttery (or mess hall as I used to know it) the excellent reading area, the offices and the central meeting area. In April this glass domed spot was comfortable but with its greenhouse atmosphere, I shudder to think what it is like in the height of summer - instant ripe tomatoes for sure.

There were these two different structural differences between the two years but what was very much the same was the warm welcome, the sight of familiar faces and, with a quick look at the badge, the names and groups came back as well. Keevin (and his bike and his father had also returned and had soon set up his workshop. The Saturday night reading session was so popular that it went on for over three hours and must have included just about everyone.

The plan is to return to Alsager next year and, I have a suspicion, that I shall too.

Tudor Williams
Forest Artworks



The Fed Needs You!

"Do you sell swimming trunks?" I asked the tall, handsome pool attendant, who stood guarding the doors of the Alsager campus swimming pool.

"Oh no," he replied, "You have to go to Crewe or Stoke-on-Trent for trunks." I smiled, acknowledging the glint of the sun on his diamond studded nose.

The drive to Alsager took me four hours. Rather than take the M62 via Leeds and Manchester, which on the map looked like the long route, I joined the M1 and decided to take the B roads through Derbyshire and Cheshire. I had not been disappointed. The narrow meandering roads opened up for me a new England, the England that lives in the hearts of townies and tourists but is rarely seen, except on biscuit tins and Sunday evening television programmes. The rolling green hills with small stone cottages planted into the landscape, standing as part of the organic, wind breathing whole. On the roadside, bedraggled sheep chew continuously, undisturbed by passing traffic and ruck-sacked hikers. The Lime quarry has been worked by men and machines for years, but still seems abundant, still manages to evoke feelings of strike it rich discovery within me. Taking another bend is to view another wonder: a huge lake that you could swim in, undulating pasture land, distant purple grey hazy



mountains and hills; small towns and villages with neat, yellow stone washed civic halls and dark bricked public houses and shops, selling decorated mugs and plates, key rings and Kendal Mint bars. This England is neither Merchant-Ivory nor Hockney's California colour rich England. This is the land of dirty boots and beer drinkers, of rusty baked bean tins in corner shops, of shitting in bushes and laughing at death. "Don't stray from the path, boy. Beware, beware!" An Eden with attitude, full of ghosts, monsters and vampire bats. This was my first Fed Festival, representing The Grimsby Writers. I arrived at 4.00 p.m. and checked in.

I decided not to bother with a swim. I'd forgotten to pack my trunks and couldn't be bothered to drive to Crewe just to purchase some. I stayed on Campus throughout the weekend. All you required was there - food and drink, interesting company, stimulating workshops, comfortable rooms, pleasant surroundings and a swimming pool for those who had brought with

them their costume.

The weekend provided me with much grub for thought. My God, Britain really is a nation of writers! Meetings such as The Festival of Writing are important events for so many people, giving individuals a chance to stand up and be heard, to share their creative ideas with others.

Next year I hope more members from The Grimsby Writers will attend this Festival and be able to bring with us WordArt, our first publication. Some Lincolnshire sausages wouldn't go amiss either!

P.S. I took the M62 home. It is considerably quicker, but lacks the charm of the B roads.

Michael Bates
Grimsby Writers

The Bard of Stepney 1917-1999: Gladys McGee

Please read my poetry
Don't let me write in vain...
Because it is only in the last few years
I found I had a brain.

It was fellow-Basement Writer Alan Gilbey who first dubbed Gladys McGee 'The Bard of Stepney' (Barred from pubs and betting offices throughout the Borough...). She was never really barred from anywhere of course but she frequently caused a commotion wherever she went. As an early member of the Basement Writers she would engage in fiery verbal combat with others young enough to be her grandchildren and was always the star when it came to live performances. With a gold lame trouser suit hanging on her tiny frame, constantly adjusting her spectacles, she would throw her arms about and yell out her poetry. But it wasn't all loud. Quiet introspective pieces about regret and loss were mingled with angry diatribes against injustices in society.

Gladys wasn't just known in East London either. At an age when many older people are taking it easy, Gladys would be hurtling up and down the motorways in the back of a van visiting other writers' groups and performing all over the country. She was prominent at Federation of Worker Writer & Community Publishers Conferences, reading such pieces as 'Empire Day' (reproduced here) and 'Snowy Day Failure', a true experience about arriving at a reading to discover that the poetry in her notebook had literally been washed away with the rain.

Eastside published two of her collections and her work was featured in various anthologies. She appeared in a television film 'Breaking Through', about East London writing and had a small acting role in a mid 1980's movie about the Titanic - in the lower decks, of course.

Although even in her seventies Gladys could dance into the early hours at parties, ill health and accidents dogged her in recent years. But

she could take it. She had, after all, entitled one of her Eastside collections 'Old Age Ain't No Place For Sissies'.

Gladys died in March surrounded by her family, including daughters Kim and Christine.

EMPIRE DAY

I'd been picked!
I'd been picked!

My arms were a-flinging,
My heart was a-singing
'Cos I'd been picked!

It was for Empire Day I'd been picked,
My teacher said I was a good reader
And I could dress up as the leader
Of the Empire we had then.

I'd wear a bronze helmet and be draped
In a red white and blue flag,
And reign over all other lands
That's what an Empire meant then.

The day came nearer,
I was getting excited...
Teacher spoke to me,
Then my day was blighted.

She realised I was too small to reign,
She wanted someone tall and striking,
Who looked like a Viking holding a shield
And looking across the sea.

I was already weedy,
Then I felt rather seedy
And asked if I could go home 'cos I was in
pain.

She said I could do this part
When I grew older
But how could I? Silly old cow!
We ain't got no Empire now!

by Gladys McGee

On Worker Writers, Workers and Writers...

From Donna Campbell

Please don't take the Worker word out of the Fed's title. The word defines where the Fed's interests lie. It tells what community you're publishing for and in, while foreholding an identity for that community which has been dislocated in our politically correct, fragmented society.

Back in the good ole days a community was defined on a geographical basis where people with different jobs, interests, sexuality and status symbols made up that community. Industrialization brought these communities to the towns, giving Marx and Engels a field day, coining such words as Proletariat and Bourgeoisie. The rest is history.

In my lifetime I have seen the breakdown of heavy industry, and with my brother, sister and mother, get on the back of my fathers bike, and move and move and move... into the 90s which sees the once massive working class community broken down into smaller groupings of people who identify (or who can be identified with) with a particular creed;

The Gay Community, Art Community, Writing Community, Drug Community, Ethnic Community etc.

This breaking down of working class community into differing strands (identities) creates opposing interests and narrow-mindedness. It takes a large body of people, and through separating the component parts of that body, weakens its resistance to infection. Decimation of working class people doesn't mean that there's now no such thing as strong class division in Britain today; it just means we need to undo layers of language that have been well and truly stitched up and take a closer look.

We are still exploited as workers, (what's that wee argument going on at the moment about a minimum wage of £3.60/hour - personally I wouldn't get out of bed for less than 10K, but that's another issue - what's British Telecom profit/minute again?) I am trying my hardest

not to use the word Capital here.

We are still exploited as workers/underclass, but new forms of identity such as sexuality, ethnicity, gender, perhaps even our style and image identity, mask this exploitation by making exploitation seem directed at a smaller group of people whom you have nothing in common with. Breaking up identity can also make exploitation seem personal, eventually rendering a feeling of hopelessness, self-blame and an attitude of, "What's the point?" (It's at this stage you're ready to buy and wear the Nationalist Tailor Made Suit; any colour of course, as long as it's black.)

Today the word Community sucks. It's ambiguous, clarifying and identifying nothing. Or even worse, it drums up an image of sick, whinging, outforwhattheycanget layabouts. But if coupled with the word Worker, it embraces a socially distinctive class of people regardless of their age, gender, religion, ethnicity and sexuality. It acknowledges and keeps from hiding the inequalities prevalent in the world today.

Yes, a reappraisal of class division wouldn't go amiss, but in the meantime our identity appears to be a survival factor crucial to this day and age.

Quite frankly, if you don't have one, you're fucked.

Give me old Karl's identifying tag anyday, rather than a politically mediated constructed one, that at the end of the day means sweet nothing.

I say let's keep this Worker identity alive and stop New Labour's cosy language infiltrating our experiences and writing.

Donna Campbell
Survivors Poetry- Glasgow

From Patrick Norman

I thought I would offer this poem as a kind of protest vote in favour of the retention of "Worker" in "Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers". Any change would make me feel self conscious wearing my new cap!

Singers in the Cold

The righteous world would need to smile in the pitiless dark
A swan preen its feathers on a desolate pond
Disappointment melt in a dream of future grace
to dissipate their rage - all they invested in the truth -
writing close to the bone, humanity's fever
rising from a family well, the tribal spirits
Singing something beyond the need
To live for glory or exalt the breed:
Take any country and they are at the centre
Unravelling the web of fear that blurs all vision
Where tyranny is widespread and the homeless struck dumb:
Voices to speak for all and maybe for some:
Balladeers spread the news without stint and the poor need
bread -
They too are among the victims waiting to be heard:

We sing of the people in all ages -
The blood-stained tapestry of mankind's rages -
the boy and the tank in Tiananmen Square -
Nelson Mandela and all who dare -
From the Tolpuddle martyrs to the miners' struggles -
The civil rights movements that send a flare
Into dark places, just a sample of the wrongs
We go on singing to right these wrongs...

At first a trickle, vox populi becomes a tide
fomented by the poets who have nothing to hide,
Wealth of lyric song within their vision
Of a better world still the brightest reason
To scorn the platinum smiles, cold unconcern
Of humming money-machines that once were men.

Patrick Norman
Islington

"Please don't drop the word Worker from your name"

Janet Zandy
Rochester, NY State

From Arthur Thickett

The Best of Both Worlds - why not?

I understand and agree with Tim that consideration should be given to a change of name (to The Federation of Community Writers and Publishers, or suchlike). In fact some years ago at a meeting at QueenSpark Books, a number of core members proposed that we put to 'The Fed' much the same thing, for the same reasons. (A vote was taken; the proposal was quite narrowly defeated.)

The main reason, in fact I believe the only possible reason, that could be given for a name-change is increasing our membership, and Friends of the Fed's recruiting chances: I would strongly gamble on the belief that it would.

So... change the name as suggested? Ah, yes, but...

I also largely agree with Nick Pollard's arguments for retention of the term 'worker' in the title. I agree with Nick's sentiments, but also agree with Tim for tactical reasons. Nick ends aptly with the exclamation - Discuss!

We should discuss the issue as raised amicably and in due course, perhaps, decide to have a vote (constitutional or unofficial) on the issue. Even so the sheer practicalities, not to say sentiments, of any name change would cause at least some upheaval for a while. My suggestions are below:

The Federation of Community
Writers and Publishers

(formerly known as the FWWCP)

“revealing the hidden talents of ordinary people, whether working, unemployed or retired”

...which really begs the original suggestion raised, because we could retain our present name, simply adding the ‘mission statement’: thus:

The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers

“revealing the hidden talents of ordinary people, whether working, unemployed or retired”

Both these explain what we are, the second takes the sting (is there one?) out of “worker”, and would be much less trouble to handle.

My suggestions rest on the real necessity, either way or adding a ‘mission statement’ to explain our title. I believe it would be necessary. It could be desirable.

Arthur Thickett
QueenSpark Books

Festival Bookbag

The groaning carrier splits its seams again with a bumper haul at the Festival of Writing Bookfair. While there weren’t perhaps as many new books on offer this year, the bookfair has become established as a lively morning event of performance, not to mention some sharp market patter from Leeds Survivors and Forest Artworks!, made much busier by the incentive of Federation book tokens.

This year Ushawant Kaur’s paintings expanded the fair into having its own fringe art festival, while launch readings were broadcast through the intercom system: Radio Fed! If the Friday night Federation Quiz inspired you to pursue your interest in community publishing to Mastermind level, now here’s the chance to acquire study materials.

Nibbles is a cookbook of ideas for writers from Survivors Poetry Scotland, 30 Cranworth St, Glasgow G12 8AG, fax 0141 3576939, cost £10. An 84 page A4 binder of things like “write a 200 word piece of really bad prose. Read and discuss.” There’s loads of practical and indispensable information in down to earth style - “Good, gripping drama has more Roy of the Rovers in it than its audience realises.”

An illustrious list of writers have contributed recipes for refreshing well seasoned writing group facilitators and encourage new ones. If you wanted to set up a writing group and never knew where to get the information - this is where.

Vikings

Creafi’s books are something rather special - with low production prices and a handmade feel to them (Bernard Lecointe’s *Le Danemark et la Saga des Vikings* actually has maps with a coloured legend crayoned in), they are unique: as is Bernard’s diary of his and Keevin’s previous visit to the 1998 Fed Festival (*Rencontres et ateliers/Meetings and Workshops*). These exemplify the work of Creafi, whose approach and methods is

described in *L’atelier typographique et pedagogique de Creafi*, a handbook detailing the use of typography to develop literacy in French as a second language. Bernard’s carefully written text, with many





The first Fed Book Token is spent

examples, illustrates how the craft of printing can have an almost Zen quality.

On the Leeds' Survivors Poetry stall I picked up Steve Bindman's Poems for Central America, which offers aspects of his relationship with Nicaragua. This (apart from frightening me with the realisation that this era of politics is now history) struggles a bit with the pressure of political vocabulary, but Witnessing Democracy turns this tendency into sharp irony on the 'Cocacoala Republic'.

Angie Hart's Diary of a Schizophrenic is variable and troubled by a faded print design which makes it difficult to read - undermining a little Dandelions and Launderette which starts "I had a soul/in the laundry basket." Jennie Dixon's Shut Up and Hear What I've Got to Say! is a strident but sometimes painful collection of verse tackling many hard subjects - and lots of drugs and plumbing porcelain - illustrated with bold photographic collages. Sex! is particularly witty. All from LSP, 54B Sholebroke

Avenue, Leeds LS7 3HB

Plastic Pigeons Mind The Gap is a quarterly from The Fulham and Chelsea Survivors' Poetry Group, 11 Farm Lane, Fulham, London SW6 1PU, £5.90 will buy you a year's sub. I picked up the

Winter Issue 98/99, which has a possible title poem by Ana Gaffino, tweaking a psychiatric theme from the phrase in Yearning on the Circle Line; Lloyd Lindsay's vivid contributions Plastic Pigeons and On the 295 Bus demand to be read aloud.

Fresher than Green, Brighter than Orange was the latest from the Survivors' Poetry Press stall, an anthology by Irish women living in London. A good value £2.95, it contains a good range, thumbing the nose at quite a few icons, like Kathleen Sullivan's Come All You Young Rebels, and Carolyn O Connell's The November



Man, which evokes the pagan elements of autumn's bonfire rituals.

My £2.50 Fed voucher went on Walls, a collection from the

Gloucester Writers' Network. Although this anthology is based around the theme of walls, unlike so many themed books where people struggle to work with the subject, there aren't any half-hearted pieces here. Over the Wall, by Sharon Prideaux and Pamela Bradley is full of absurd ripostes as two women discuss life's disappointments; Ben Jameson's Rome AD 64 follows in a similar vein with an alternative account of the fall of Rome - despite the author being only 7; Judith Temple's In Memento Muri is a moving souvenir of a forty year old Italian lover.

Community, publishing,
worker, writing,
and all that

I missed the QueenSpark bookstall, but I have got a bootleg copy of their Spring 1999 QueenSpark News. Federation magazine intends to nick great chunks of this for a future issue, but in the meantime send off to 49 Grand Parade, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 2OA for a good collection of articles on QueenSpark and community publishing. Every Fed group should get a copy.

Nick Pollard 11

Reviews

Hi Rise Poems

Just a TWOC at Twilight by Mike Hoy, ISBN 0 9535701 0X,
£3 from: Hi Rise Publications, 2 Netherdene Rd, Dronfield,
Sheffield S18 1TR



Imagine if JG Ballard had a Sheffield accent and had lived up Norfolk Park he might have turned out something like this. If lived long enough - hi rise poetry about short and messy lives.

Gone To Earth the gaping bystanders at a tower block shoot

out know:

"it's Norfolk Park
and nothing but a passing thrill
nowt to break, little left to loot.
George takes his snap bag to the chippy.

The rest drift off to watch The Bill."

Mike Hoy's poems are about life in the raw - his verse is wrought from wrecked cars and bin liners and set where no-one wants to call home. Although you might think you're going to be turned off by the grim and pungent detail, have another look. Rapunzel Rap weaves across the romantic and any element of what might too easily be assumed as the romanticising of urban poverty:

"The magic mirror's dirty it sings of younger girls
with eyes like double diamonds and tears as hard as pearls,
hair like folded roses and skin as rich as milk
Your crown has turned to silver, his face to crumpled silk."

Rock and roll is never completely out of earshot, and comparisons with Springsteen and even the Velvet Underground are tempting, but this isn't art school band cultivated edginess. You can smell the lifts, and see the dull council paint between the lines.

Chas Trent

Out of the Basement

£2 from: Doncaster Women's Centre Group, 21 Cleveland St., Doncaster

Tales of bigamy, birth, abortion, chickens and dry stone walling in a fine collection of work from Doncaster Women. This is one of those rare anthologies where there is no weak spot, nothing you wonder why they put in. Very noticeably all the pieces are tight, without any over writing; evidence perhaps of writing being well worked over in constructive group sessions. I liked Irene Coupe's 1934 and Gordon Richards Won the St. Leger, a tale of a first job collecting eggs; and Dorothy Mason's plea for Beetroot rights; Linda Vincent's Words, about the kind of relationships where there are either not enough, or no need, for words. A very enjoyable collection, with a lot to read again and again.

Carol Nicholas

London Voices - I'm Running in the Marathon on Sunday

£4.50(+ £1 p+p) from: London Voices, c/o P.O. Box 540, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 6DR

London Voices seem to specialise in arcane subject material, thus we have the final thoughts of a fly in a jam jar, teak oil, and excavating dead miners in Spitzbergen. This outing also contains a tale of mischievous fun from the late Gertrude Elias: (Murl: A Christmas Story. Lore, an Austrian refugee, advertises in a Swiss paper for a marriage partner and meets Murl, who has never heard of Karl Marx but knows Engels. A woodcarver who makes Angels.) Donal O Hagan's Advice to those lousy R's and who worry about not being a size 10 (Marry today. Be adulterous with the past and with the future...) and a new version of the Red Flag by Bob Dixon.

There's some great illustrations too, particularly from Gertrude Elias and Jane Deakin, but back in the well trammelled groove of love poetry the group seem to find their London Voices, leaving behind the frivolous and, in Peter Imray's Present, Joseph Hunt's Private Moviehouse and Richard Bell's Your Eyes all tackling difficult and risky areas of the self and relationships.

Nick Pollard

Charlotte Mason "a pioneer of sane education"

by Marian Wallace Ney £9.95
ISBN 1-900219-14-X from:
Educational Heretics Press,
113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote
Hills, Nottingham NG9 3FQ

I was very pleased to receive this book as I had been lucky enough to attend a PNEU (Parents National Educational Union) junior school, and Charlotte Mason was the person behind this movement. What of course I did not know at eight years old was the theory behind the education. This book tries to bring, what were quite revolutionary ideas at the beginning of the century, to today's schools.

The style is a bit dry, this book feels like an educationalist speaking to like minded people, but the ideas shine through.

Books are seen as a vital part of education. Charlotte Mason advocated that school rooms should be full of books, not textbooks, but real books, and children could equally enjoy books seen as adult reading. Children and teachers are seen as equals in their quest for knowledge and they should learn with and from each other.

Charlotte Mason ran a teacher training college where she put her theories into practice, and Marian Ney attempts to show that Charlotte Mason was at least an equal to those great pillars of educational theory Piaget and Dewey. She

uses the book to plead for a wider and more child centred education, where children are encouraged to broaden their views and be attentive listeners, developing the self confidence to give their own opinion; and have teachers and parents who will listen and learn with the child. This is the basis of Charlotte Mason's work.

Tim Diggles

Books to be reviewed and reviewing books

The books reviewed in this magazine are published by Member groups of the Fed, or by various community presses. We feel it is important that books with often limited distribution are reviewed, to bring them to the notice of a wider audience.

If you have new books or ones that have been out for some time but still deserve looking at, please send them to us. Remember, words don't have a sell by date.

If you would like to review books, let us know. We are looking for a wide range of views and opinions.

To review or send books for review contact us at:

FWWCP,
67 The Boulevard, Tunstall,
Stoke-on-Trent
ST6 6BD

New Books

Armchair Theatre, by Brian Docherty, published by Hearing Eye Press, ISBN 1 870 841 59 X £6, 10a Dickenson Rd, London N8 9ET: Brian Docherty's first full length collection featuring poems which draw on the legacy of Auden, William Carlos Williams, Allen Ginsberg, and the political culture in which he grew up. Childhood memories, contemporary Irish politics, personal relations and the Thatcher era all feature here. Brian Docherty was born in Glasgow in 1953 and now lives in North London.

Naked Songs and Rhythms of Hope, by Frank Bangay, £7.95 Spare Change Distributors, PO Box 26, 136-138 Kingsland High St, Hackney, London E8 2NS. Frank's long awaited collection of writings and drawings dating from 1974 to 1999. The book will be launched at Mad Pride Benefits in June and at the Union Chapel, Compton Ave, London N1 at 8pm on Saturday 11th September.

A Woman's Place, £7.50 from Women's Words, 59 Stanmer Park Road, Brighton BN1 7JL (isbn 1 874548 30 7). This books is published to celebrate 25 years of Brighton Women's Centre. It is a collection of oral testimonies by over thirty women, a very open, poignant and humorous collection, with photographic portraits by Lynne Fox.

Contributions are invited for Fire in the Blood, "An Anthology inspired by and relating to intoxication. Fire in the Blood will look at stimulants and intoxicants through the eyes of junkies, alcoholics, mystics, artists, writers, politicians, the clergy, gurus, community leaders, hedonists, clubbers, historians and anthropologists.

The editor is keen to consider intelligent, informed articles dealing with all aspects of drug taking from every faction in the debate. Novel extracts, short stories, prose, poetry and art inspired by stimulants or dealing with issues around them are also invited. When this anthology is completed it will be published in a limited run by Acid Angel and all contributors will receive a complimentary copy."

Contributions should be sent to Dee Rimbaud, Fire in the Blood, c/o Acid Angel, Dept. Z1, 35 Falkland St (GFL) Glasgow, G12 9QZ. Send to Dept. X2 for copies of Acid Angel Magazine Issues 2 (£3.50/US\$10) and 3 (£5/US\$15) or e mail acidangel@acidity.globalnet.co.uk

Kensington Welfare Rights Union

During a recent visit by members of the FWWCP to the USA, they were taken on a tour round Kensington, the poorest district of Philadelphia, by the KWRU. Following the visit, KWRU have become Associate Members of the Fed, and this article tells something of the background to the work of an inspiring community organisation.

The Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWRU) is a multi-racial organization of, by and for poor and homeless people. We believe that we have a right to thrive - not just barely survive. KWRU is dedicated to organizing of welfare recipients, the homeless, the working poor and all people concerned with economic justice.

KWRU was started by a group of poor women in April 1991. We came together out of necessity - our communities and the survival of our families were threatened by Governor Casey's welfare cuts and we came together to do three basic things:

1. Speak to the issues which directly affect our lives: poor people have been excluded from debates, such as welfare reform, which have huge impact on our families. We are committed to tell the stories of what is really happening in our lives and in poor communities across the country. We have testified at local, state and national hearings; we have spoken at welfare offices, college campuses, religious congregations, union halls, social service agencies, and anywhere we have had the chance. Our director, Cheri Honkala, was the only welfare recipient to speak during the Congressional welfare reform hearings. Recently a photo-exhibit by photographer Harvey Finkle, the book Myth

of the Welfare Queen by David Zucchini and a documentary, Poverty Outlaw, by Skylight Pictures have helped us get our stories out to more and more people.

2. Organize a broad-based movement to end poverty: we know that there is enough to go around in this, the richest country in the world. We believe that the American people are a just and loving people and that we can build a movement, led by poor people, to end poverty once and for all. We struggle everyday to teach and organize poor people, and all those concerned with economic justice, to create fundamental social change. KWRU is an organization of, by and for poor people; however we work closely with the several groups: KWRU is an affiliate of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Workers, AFSCME, AFL-CIO - this reflects the need for unity between the employed and the unemployed around issues such as workfare, downsizing, etc. KWRU has joined the Labor Party, a new political party which is based in the interests of working and unemployed people. (We believe that neither the Democrats nor the Republicans are interested in meeting the needs of the poor - and we believe it is time for a

new political party in this country.) KWRU is a chapter of the National Welfare Rights Union. We also have growing relationships with students, the women's movement, lawyers, social workers, artists & musicians and a variety of community organizations. Our focus is in Kensington, but we know that this must be a national, and even international, movement.

3. Help each other, and all poor people get what we need to survive: we are committed to seeing that all people have the basic necessities of life - food, clothing, utilities, medical care and housing. We have assisted over 400 families in obtaining housing and utilities. We have set up tent cities when the shelter system was full and we recently established the Human Rights House as a base for emergency housing, free food and

clothing distribution, and free medical clinics. We assist poor and homeless families with whatever problems they are having - all that we ask in return is that they join the KWRU to help others and to build a movement to end poverty. From its birth, the Kensington Welfare Rights Union has been active in taking over abandoned public properties, setting up tent cities, and other actions which both meet our basic needs and protest the conditions of poverty today. In 1995, after a campaign of protest and civil disobedience, our director was the only welfare recipient who spoke during the national hearings on welfare reform. In August 1996 KWRU led a 140-mile March for Our Lives to Pennsylvania's state capitol to protest the Governor's decision to cut 250,000 poor people off of medical care and the President's decision to enact

One of KWRU's many eloquent

"welfare reform." In June 1997 KWRU led a March for Our Lives, to the United Nations to bring welfare reform's human rights violations to the international arena. Today, through the Economic Human Rights Campaign, KWRU continues to teach, fight, and struggle to build a movement to end poverty, led by the poor.

*This article is from the KWRU Website, it can be found at: <http://www.libertynet.org/kwru/index.html>

HAND IN HAND UPDATE

Hand in Hand is the Fed's three-year Lottery-funded training project. It aims to increase Fed members' organisational, fund-raising and marketing skills, and to help create long-term networks of groups which can share skills and training. So what's been happening recently, and what's coming up, and how can you get involved?

Weekend Courses

Three weekend residential courses are coming up. All weekend courses are free, with travel costs covered if necessary, and places are available on a first come, first served basis. They normally begin with lunch on the Saturday and finish around 4pm on the Sunday, and are held at a variety of venues around the country. While the courses are quite tightly structured to enable people to get the most benefit from the time available, we try to keep the atmosphere informal and welcoming, with lots of opportunities to socialise and relax.

The first course, Be Small – Think Big, is especially for smaller Fed groups which do not have a paid worker of any kind. It will look at the particular needs and concerns of smaller groups and will include sessions on: funding and publicising groups; working collectively; keeping the momentum going; publishing; running workshops; the national context – and more besides. The course is now full up – in fact there is a 'reserve' list of seven people. There has been such a demand for this course that we are considering running it again at some point, so if you would like to register in advance, contact me at the address below.

Working with the Media will take place at Wedgwood College, Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent on 18-19 September, and is back by popular demand after running very successfully last September. The course will aim to develop participants' skills and confidence in publicising and marketing their groups and organisations. As we go to press there are a few places left, so if you are interested it is worth giving me a ring to check.

The third course will take place in November and will provide training for people on Management/Executive Committees of their groups and organisations. Planning is at an early stage, but we want the course to be a practical guide to being on a voluntary management committee – what to expect, what will be expected of you, legal aspects, contributing to meetings, and so on. All groups will be mailed about this course nearer the time, but contact me if you would like to book in advance.

Making a Living as a Writer in the Community

This eight-week training programme for writers who want to explore and develop opportunities for getting writing-related work is drawing to a close. A full account of the course, with information and tips from each session, will be featured in the next issue of the magazine.

Promoting Your Group

Thirteen people from nine groups have been participating in this Hand in Hand / Commonword project in Manchester. They have attended four training days to develop their skills in marketing and promoting their groups and in planning and organising events. They are now putting their skills into practice in the exciting final phase of the project: a start-off fund of £900 has been provided to encourage the participants to work together to plan and deliver a joint promotion scheme, with the support of the course trainer. After much debate, the group have decided to use the start-off fund to pursue two related initiatives:

Postcards:

The group plan to publish a set of postcards to provide information about each of the nine groups. The set of nine postcards will be distributed in a pack and will feature writing from each group, as well as practical information about how to attend. The aim is to attract enquiries and new members to the groups, and to attract media attention.

Showcase Reading:

The postcard pack will be launched at an event which will aim to showcase the diversity of writing in different Manchester groups, and to attract new members to these groups.

For more information on this project, contact Cathy Bolton at Commonword (0161 236 2773) or me at the number below.

Helping Hand

This scheme offers short bursts of specialised, tailor-made training for individual groups on issues affecting them. The main areas groups are asking for training in are fund-raising, marketing, financial planning, developing their publishing, and running groups. If you think your group could benefit from up to four days' training in these or any other areas, do contact me.

1999 Projects

This year we will be developing three major training projects in partnership with Fed groups. Hand in Hand is particularly keen that the following groups benefit from the scheme:

- ◆ Groups which haven't taken part in any Hand in Hand projects so far;
- ◆ Groups which don't have a paid worker;
- ◆ Groups which want to explore ways of

working with other groups or organisations;

- ◆ Groups which have a specific training need;
- ◆ Groups which have links with, or would like to forge links with, older people.

So if you have any thoughts, ideas, queries about how your group could be involved, do get in touch.

Christine Bridgwood
Training Development Coordinator
37 Airdale Road
Stone
Staffs
ST15 8DP
Tel/fax: 01785 286 177
E-mail: handinhand@cwcom.net

New Fed Executive Committee Elected

The 1999 AGM elected a new Executive Committee for the Fed. There are some new faces and it was also a time to thank some long time members who were standing down. Arthur Thickett stood down as Chair after his four year term on the Exec. was completed but we are sure he will be back!

The new Executive Committee is as follows:

Chair - Pat Smart, Prescott Writers, Merseyside

Vice Chair - Margaret Pearson,

Prescot Writers

Treasurer - Alvin Culzac,
Shorelink Writers, Hastings

Honorary Secretary - Louise
Glasscoe, Commonword,
Manchester

Magazine Editor - Nick Pollard,
Heeley Writers, Sheffield

Committee Members -

Eric Davidson, Dumfries and
Galloway Survivors

Vie Gray, Ethnic Communities
Oral History, Project, London

Tony Guest, Heeley Writers

Ashley Jordan, Shorelink
Writers, Hastings

Fitz Lewis, Gatehouse Books,
Manchester

Richard McKeever, Working
Press, London

The Executive Committee are
all volunteers and meet four
times a year. They also break
into sub committees for all
aspects of the Fed's work.

Friends of the Fed

We often get asked at the Fed about individual membership. Membership of The Fed is for groups and organisations only, but we do have a scheme so individuals can play a valued role, The Friends of the Fed.

Friends of the Fed either give a small donation each month by bankers order, usually around £3 to £5, or an annual donation of around £36 - £50. It is their way to help the work of the Fed.

Friends receive this magazine, the Broadsheet,

Membership of the FWWCP

The Membership of the Fed has now reached 55 groups, with an increasing international presence. But there are still many areas of Britain that have few or no member groups. Over the next few years we are working on membership development. We will be working with local organisations to find the groups for whom membership of the Fed would be useful.

There are a number of different types of Membership:

Full Membership is for established writers groups and publishers who work to support writers in their community, giving a voice to those who may have little opportunity for self expression. Full Members take an active role in all aspects of the Fed's work.

First Chapter Membership is for groups and organisations who may be less established, or wish to try us out for a year. This membership costs are 25% lower than Full Membership.

Associate Membership is for groups unable to

take a fully active role in the Fed, for reasons such as being abroad or care home.

Reciprocal Membership is for similar organisations to the Fed, who wish to share information and work with us.

To help the Fed develop in the future, we are looking for more Friends. If you would like to become a Friend contact us now at the address below and become an invaluable part of making writing and publishing more accessible.

Members are able to take advantage of our often free training schemes, publications, networking, and take an active role in the organisation. They are part of a community of people, who share the aim to make writing and publishing more accessible. If your group wish to join contact us -

By mail: **FWWCP, 67 The Boulevard, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6BD**

e-mail: fwwcp@cwcom.net
phone: 01782 822327

or use our Website to print out forms:

<http://www.fwwcp.mcmail.com>

In the next issue of Federation Magazine

The next issue is due to be published in Autumn 1999. It will feature the visit made by Fed members to the USA, where they went to Philadelphia and worked with Temple University and community organisations; visited Fed members in Canada; took a very active role in the Working Class Studies Conference in Youngstown, Ohio. On the way they encouraged organisations to join, set up new opportunities for other members and visited Niagara Falls.

We are also looking for articles, information and reviews from you. The deadline is 24th September 1999. To make sure you get your Federation magazine send £2 to:

FWWCP, 67 The Boulevard, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6BD