

Federation Magazine

The magazine of The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers £1.50



Can you remember FEDFest?



Issue No.20
Summer 2000

- FedFest 2000
- Fed-er-ally Scievin
- Virtual Palestine
- Grassroots Montreal
- Poetry Places
- The People's Geography
- Update from Mauritius
- Toufann

FED25

- Hand in Hand
- Book Reviews

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The Federation of Worker Writers & Community Publishers

The FWWCP was formed in 1976, and now has a Membership of nearly sixty independently organised writers' workshops, community publishers and organisations in Britain, and around the World. It is an umbrella organisation for those who wish to share their skills and work with their communities.

The FWWCP aims to further working class writing and community publishing, and the Membership share a belief that writing and publishing should be made accessible to all.

The FWWCP publish this magazine and a Broadsheet of writing; we run an annual Festival of Writing; organise training; develop networks; encourage people to express themselves; offer

advice, and much more!

To become a Member of the FWWCP contact the address below. Membership is for groups only. Individuals can take a valuable role by becoming a Friend of the Fed, and get involved in all our activities. 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, previous issues and a wealth of useful information is available on our Website: www.fwwcp.mcmail.com

F e d i t o r i a l

Social Exclusion: we've been there, done it, and we've got some T shirts and badges left...

Soon the Fed will be 25 years old. We've moved from cranking offset litho presses and duplicators to desktop publishing, from a handful of groups to an international membership, from financing our publications with rent strike money to ever more complex funding applications. Many people would claim that the world has changed, that the social and political agendas around the need for working class writing and community publication are different now.

But they're not. Our society is still one of difference in opportunity. People are still struggling with literacy, with finding out, years after school, that they have a right to expression after all, in English or another language or dialect. In measures to legislate for a more inclusive society, the fine print can still produce an expropriated result, our livelihoods made past, peddled back to us as a stuffed museum exhibit, interpreted for, not by us.

This is why it is important that we act on the proposal to establish a Fed archive – a living archive which encourages people to reflect on their lives and realise their ability to make peoples' history and culture. Not to dilute and dumb down, but to produce material which is fresh with raw experience and vitality, and which draws on our best resource – ourselves.

No – this isn't vacuous populism. The membership of the Fed is a tremendous educational and cultural resource, with the capacity to tap into the shared knowledge of many communities and a great many individual experiences. What is more, as 'social exclusion' becomes the term on everyone's lips, the addendum to every conference title and policy initiative, it's something our members have been writing about from as soon as they learned to write. Or publish. So, read all about it!

Nick Pollard

E-mail from Mauritius

Dear all who wrote wonderful letters of protest to the government against the new Public Security Act. (see *Federation Magazine No. 19*)

As a direct result of all our efforts the Public Security Act is not yet actually law - by a hairs' breadth - but nevertheless not actually law. We are still trying to prevent it ever getting "proclaimed". Proclamation is an administrative process, but because of all your and our hard work, this administrative step has become a moment when the Act can be and has been delayed - making a total delay of nearly three months now. We want to turn this delay into non-proclamation, and finally total withdrawal.

We have prepared a report for this year's United Nations Human Rights Commission General Assembly which started on 20th March, 2000. This gives an update on where we are now, and also the accusations we are making against "our" government, so you may wish to read it*. There are trade union federations and NGO's who will be bringing up issues in the paper, and Mrs. Mary Robinson, who is the Chair, will also get a copy. If you know of an organization which can find a way to have this brought up in the UNHRC general assembly, please could you either send a copy of our document to them to do the necessary - or let us know their co-ordinates as soon as possible.

We thank you very much for your key support. We had dozens of thoughtfully drafted letters and faxes, from literally all over the world, and our government is particularly sensitive to this kind of pressure. In addition, as a result of all the protests and support for us, formal charges have not been laid against the seven human rights defenders arrested for protesting against the new law, nor have they had their passports taken away from them. (Yet!).

Warm wishes from us in Mauritius,
Lindsey Collen, Rajni Lallah, Alain Ah-Vee, Ram Seegobin and Ashok Subron For Lalit, and the Ad Hoc Committee

**Copies available by e-mail from fwwcp@cwcom.net, or by mail, send large SAE to: FWWCP, 67 The Boulevard, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6BD*

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Millennial Festival Bookbag

Fed Festival bookfairs are much livelier than the doldrum early nineties, with participants getting into the market stall holder spirit, shouting off their wares, playing tape recordings of their work, and in Leeds Survivors case being open all hours. Tip for next year, get the stall by the corridor to the toilet, and refuse bladder relief until you've got a sale. I had to buy a book I'd already got.



I started at Eastside books where I picked up a couple of publications which have been out for a while, but I'd not seen before, *The Battle of Cable Street*, by the Cable Street Group, a very well designed source which would lend itself for use as school material – if the battle was ever on the national curriculum. *The Tower Hamlets Connection* is an amazingly rich Biographical Guide to who's who in the borough, from highwaymen to mayors, hymn writers to footballers, by Harold Finch and published by Stepney Books and Tower Hamlets Libraries. A good £7.99 worth.

Gatehouse yielded *A Song For Carrying Water* – a collection of traditional and personal stories in English and Somali, full of children eating monsters, women dancing with hyenas, and songs for camels, which I'm sure my kids will enjoy, and Charles Carrington's *The Body Builder*, a tale of bullworkers and bullies for literacy students.

Building Lives is a new publication from Survivors' Poetry Scotland, recording a programme of events around the impact of buildings on lives. Contrasting it with *Ore In Other Words*, published by the Ore Valley Community, an oral history of part of Hastings which I picked up on the Shorelink stall, the thing which most stands out is the use of photographs. The Ore Valley book (£5) is not cheap but the pictures are relatively sharp, using screened images. Building Lives has enlarged many images until they become pixilated. I think, if you are using images extensively, you need to give them as much respect as the text. Having just heard Quentin Blake (the childrens' laureate)

talking about the importance of drawing, and how sad it is that many adults don't draw for fun, I reckon illustration is something we should promote more in the Fed.

You shouldn't buy a book for its cover but Rosie Lugosi's *Coming Out at Night* was a must, fortunately the contents are as sharp as the picture on the front. I also picked up her *Hell and Eden*, from which I particularly liked 'Lisbon' and 'no translation'. The other book I bought for its cover was Marjory Batchelor's *A Life Behind Bars* – the life of a barmaid from QueenSpark. Apart from a number of excellent photographs, the pages spill over with as much life as you might expect from a decent pint of Harvey's Sussex Ale. Sheila Winters' *Moulsecoomb Memories* and Ernie Mason's *A Working Man* are almost as good. They aren't about pubs, which clinches it for me, although Ernie's plywood hand signalling device might help get my Fiesta let out of the Asda car park on a Saturday morning.

Paul King was selling off duplicates from his collection of Fed books, from which I got a very early Sally Flood, *Window On Brick Lane* (1979), and Hackney Workers Education Association's *The Threepenny Doctor* (1974), but it was also exciting to pick up the two latest novels from Crocus, pacy looking



offerings about Mancunian life I've yet to read, *A Little Palace*, by Janna Hoag, and *Low Life* by Mike Duff. Quite a contrast between these well finished modern designs and clean print, and the smudgy hand finished publications of the seventies. It would be easy to overlook something like these early books with their rusty staples and duplicator printed pages. Nowadays they seem almost quaint. Putting them into print was probably far more laborious than it is now to produce much longer texts, and a sizeable commitment from the volunteers and co-operative members doing so – but who else is publishing working class novels these days?

Nick Pollard



2000 Festival of Writing

The Last Lunch At Leicester

(and 'only I met the real Rosie Lugosi,' urgggh!)

She came into the dining hall a little late; small, young, a certain expression on her face showing that she was a disaster looking for someone to happen to - why did she choose me? Well, there happened to be a vacant seat next to me, innocent as that, I guess. "Pass me the croutons, please", was her introductory remark; for me, disconcerting, it rhymed with Luton! And I didn't know what croutons were - except they rhymed with Luton (Parkway, airport) - so I passed her everything until she was happy and quiet for two minutes. Then she started giggling, so I spilt some water in front of her table place...and blamed her for it: we'd introduced ourselves by this time, her name was Tulip and she was from the Leeds Survivors group - would I survive her? She had a certain crazy charm but I was tired through lack of sleep and about to call it for a weekend: but I started giggling too, at her. Fatal...crouton & Luton was getting at me as well; that's where it had all started for me Luton Parkway airport: well it was nearly all over: but we had each other in stitches over nothing and the happy adrenaline was flowing for me. She was going on the Botanical garden trip, was I...? "No too tired, lack of sleep two nights in a row"... "oh go on"... "well OK" Daisy joins us which pleases me greatly - fool that I am.

Julie Andrews

So for me the highlight of the Fedfest Leicester 2000 was - what was the anti-climax for many - the Leicester Uni. botanical gardens tour. We went in a loose crowd, myself being with Daisy and Tulip more or less all of the time. Sunday afternoon in the open to the public botanical gardens and...there we were, the three of us dancing and singing our way through, across and over the quiet Sunday gardens. We sang the Julie Andrews song: (I can still hear Daisy's voice) "Doe is for a female deer"... (interpreted by myself as DEAR!); and "we're off to see the Wizard" (I was the Tin Man, or the Cowardly Lion, I forget) the two daft ones were all rolled into one to all that stunned Sunday audience and we also sang "Que Sera Sera what ever will be will be"... I got right into that one (the Julie Andrews song was pitched a bit high for me, though Daisy tried to bring it down for me) anyway I enjoyed listening to the other two. I also managed The Wizard... well enuff. However, the great climax of this bizarre afternoon was ... The Great Hill Rolling Event. Well, I did try to stop em...no hope...

Daisy and Tulip

... See, it was like this: A quiet green patch of the gardens - two or three kids rolling down a gentle green hill, giggling: I shouted to someone "Oh gawd don't let the two daft ones see this or they will join in!" Maybe... just maybe the two daft ones overheard me (I secretly hoped!) They stopped and...before you could say "stop idiots!" - they were rolling - rolling, to the astonished gaze of the Sunday onlookers...I made 3 excuses for them: "overwork, stress, exams, drunkenness, insanity" ... I gave up and took up a collection for them with my baseball cap, got two rude notes, sweets from children two bottle tops, a half drunk mini - scotch, which I saw off on the home bound train and...73 pence. I gave Daisy and Tulip the sweets and bottle tops and in return Tulip made me carry the exotic fruit she'd picked up off the dining room table which was now crawling with ants from the botanic hot house we all visited, where we sat down and talked with a German Professor who was letting his astonished hair down somewhat...

So that that was it really. However, to be fair I must say... Daisy and Tulip were much much nicer than the visitor I got at 2am on the Saturday morning in room G12: a visit from the REAL Rosie Lugosi! - That's why it was icy cold! That's why the kindly Stamford House staff MOVED ME TO F9 FOR THE SATURDAY NIGHT... They knew even I might not survive a second visit by her/it (I'm the only man that's been bitten by the real Rosi Lugosi and lived to tell the tale). She spat my blood out ... "too much bloody alcohol !" she screamed: any way we had a bit of a chat before she flew back to Luton Parkway airport, bound for Bosnia and her coffin home in the hills... yes it is official it cannot be denied it's on the official Stamford House records for FRIDAY & SATURDAY the 7/8th April 2000.

Art Thickett
QueenSpark Books

Moonlight Dancing

I shared some circle dances at the recent FedFest. Many of the dances have stories associated with them and I'm interested in the overlap between dance and creative writing. Maria Garner of Grimsby Writers wrote this poem after the session, inspired by her first experience of circle dance. She writes 'I enjoyed the circle dancing very much - it is such a harmonious activity. I started writing a poem at the Festival. It took a bit of a detour when I worked on it at home but I thought you would enjoy reading it. I've tried to get a slow dance rhythm running through it.'

John Walsh
QueenSpark Books

Moonlight Dancers

From my window
I am watching
moonlight dancers
on the lawn

Puppets moving
to the music
following the
leader's call

Hand in hand the
ghostly figures
making circles
through the night

Moving in and
moving out the
dancers rise and
fall as one

Shadows follow
moonlight dancers
copy every
move they make

In the silence
of the morning
like the dancers
they'll be gone

Maria Garner
Grimsby Writers



The Photographs (this page, pages 4 & 5 and the cover) are a small selection from Fedfest 2000, taken by the delegates and participants, using disposable cameras, and capture some of the spirit of the weekend.



Palestine: Virtually Independent

miss ayesha, first how are you i am so sorry for late to write to you . i said to my friend that i can write to you the letter by internet cafe in rafah and so we are goto sum from our self the money and they promise that i will send to you. after that they don't keep the promise i am was very angry for them and then i said to my brother for the story and he said you can write in my company in gaza. and now i am write to you in 1:23 in night

This is part of a letter sent to me by Mohammed, a fourteen-year-old boy who lives in Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip, and a pupil in my class last summer. I was there with a British voluntary organisation called UNIPAL (Universities' Trust for Educational Exchange with Palestinians), which every year sends volunteers, mainly university students, to teach English in summer schools in refugee camps in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon.

Mohammed is just one of the children I taught who have since kept in touch with me by e-mail, whether independently or through their teachers. Post from the Gaza Strip tends to be detained by the Israelis and can take months - if it arrives at all - so e-mail has proved to be an invaluable form of communication, helping break down in a small way the sense of isolation felt by Palestinians. Yet given the problems of everyday life in the camps and towns, how much of a role does the Internet play in Palestinian society?

Mohammed found it difficult to write because the local Internet 'café' in Rafah wouldn't help him. However, access to the Internet is also affected by the legacy of Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories, despite the limited autonomy now achieved by Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority. Following the 1967 occupation, Palestinians witnessed the arrival of Israeli controls on, amongst other things, telephone lines.

Seven-Year wait

The Israeli government telecommunications company, Bezeq, was slow to service Palestinian users in the Occupied Territories, who waited for seven years on average for a telephone to be installed, and often much longer. In addition, Palestinians were

conscious that telephone lines provided the military authorities with intelligence information.

In 1989, during the Intifada, an Israeli military order made it an offence for Palestinians to use telephone lines for sending faxes, electronic mail or any other electronic transmissions, and the legal restriction was only lifted in 1995 in the Oslo II agreement.

Palestinian access in the West Bank and Gaza to leased lines, the dedicated 24-hour connections necessary for institutional access, were forbidden for 'security reasons' before the Oslo accords, then became 'subject to negotiations'.

Control

Israel designed the telecommunications infrastructure in the Occupied Territories so all exchanges were outside areas of possible future Palestinian control; therefore, calls within the Gaza Strip or the West Bank are switched through Israeli exchanges. The Palestinian Authority has now been given control of the networks in the areas they govern. However, the different parts of Area A (Palestinian control), and Area B (mixed control) are scattered, and divided by the much larger Area C (full Israeli control). Therefore the Palestinian telephone networks remain an integrated part of the Israeli telephone network.

A survey recently published by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics shows that only 6.9 percent of households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have a computer, most concentrated in the West Bank (29,038 as opposed to 4,829 in the Gaza Strip). 24,723 of these computers are to be found in urban areas, with just 2,554 in refugee camps. Although major population centres are served well by Internet Service Providers (ISPs), costs for Internet access through an ISP range from £7-20 per month for dial-up access and £150-300 for a permanent connection, while the average Palestinian wage is just over £250 each month.

All Palestinian ISPs must go through an Israeli service provider, and while Palestinian ISPs have an estimated 8,000 clients, representing individuals, institutions and companies, the actual number of Palestinians who use the Internet is much higher. All universities have Internet access, and recently Internet cafés have been springing up. In addition, the number of Web sites located in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem grew from nine in early 1996 to 228 in September 1999.

Clearly, the communications structure in the West Bank and Gaza cannot be compared to that in Israel.

Not only do Israelis make huge use of telephones (Israel has one of the world's highest per capita rates of mobile phones), computers and the Internet, but they have a wide range of print and broadcast media at their disposal, and a variety of opinions are expressed in these forums. Freedom of expression has often been limited for Palestinians, however, and even since the Oslo accords it is suspected that 'technical problems' with the Israeli Internet have been a deliberate way to prevent Palestinian Web sites from reporting directly to the world at times of political tension.

Given the nature of the Palestinian Authority's rule, and the (self-) censorship of Palestinian print, radio and television, the possibility of attempts to restrict content by Palestinians themselves is also something to watch, but unlikely given the technical issues involved.

Despite the real problems of poverty and infrastructure, the difficulties in acquiring relevant skills and education faced by Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, and the fact that the language of the World Wide Web is overwhelmingly English, the Internet has offered much-welcomed opportunities to network, learn and communicate with the outside world. This is particularly true of the NGO community, which historically has played a significant role in Palestinian society, with many of the responsibilities of development a government normally would have. The Internet is a crucial means of organizing, motivating, and informing - speaking directly to the world and avoiding the representation and reinterpretation of the Palestinian situation by outside agencies still live. Across Borders is a project established last year by the Birzeit University Information Technology Unit which aims to bring the Internet into Palestinian refugee camps across the Middle East. The first centre was launched in Dheisheh Camp, near Bethlehem, in July last year, and the second was opened in Khan Yunis camp in Gaza a few weeks ago.

Connection

The project's aims are to connect Palestinian refugees with each other and to create bilingual camp Web sites to provide information about the camps. Located in the middle of the camp, the Khan Yunis centre will soon begin running courses in Internet use and Web site design, as well as provide 24-hour Internet connection to the camp residents. Shaml, the Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Centre, plans to build a refugee database and bulletin board Web site in partnership with the Across Borders Project.

Enlighten is an organization aiming to establish

computer-aided learning centres with Internet access in Palestinian refugee camps throughout the Middle East. Although the United Nations Relief and Works Agency provides many schools in the camps, few of them have computers, so refugee children cannot develop IT skills and access the Internet. Enlighten established the first centre in Bureij Camp in the Gaza Strip in January 1999. The centre is solely for the purpose of giving children who have had little or no exposure to computers the opportunity to learn how to use them and to access the Internet, free of charge.

Save the Children's 'Eye to Eye' Web site has photos and children's accounts of life in camps in different parts of the Middle East. "We want to tell you what our lives are like as Palestinian refugees, using our own photographs and stories. We feel cut off from young people in other countries, but through 'Eye to Eye' we can make links worldwide."

Independent

In February 1997, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers received inquiries about the possibility of delegating a country-code Top-Level Domain (ccTLD) for Palestine. In the United States, a variety of TLDs can be used such as .com, .org, and .edu, but in the rest of the world Web addresses come under single country codes. The entities eligible for a TLD are determined by the United Nations International Standards Organization (ISO) list 3166-1. In the summer of 1999 the United Nations Statistics Division announced the addition of "Occupied Palestinian Territory" to its list of country codes, and on October 1 the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency announced it was adding "Palestinian Territory, Occupied" to ISO 3166-1. On March 22, 2000, after more than two years of deliberations, ICANN announced that .ps is now available for use as the official Internet domain of Palestine, making it independent in cyberspace if not yet in reality.

Ayesha Saldanha, SAMPAD

This article first appeared in Online Journalism Review, published by USC Annenberg, available online at, www.ojr.org

see also page 13

Grassroots: Community Writing, Community Development

The Fed was invited to attend the *Grassroots Community Writing, Community Development Festival* in Montreal April 6th-7th, the same time as our festival. With only a few days notice I re-arranged my life, booked a flight, and set off not quite knowing what to expect... (rain welcomed me, followed by a day of snow (40cms, a record!) then sun).

We were invited by Linda Shoet, Director of the Centre for Literacy (Quebec) along with a number of other groups to read work and talk about our groups. Grassroots was part of the 'Blue Metropolis Literary Festival' in Montreal, held at the Hotel Des Gouverneurs. On the Friday Linda welcomed us and spoke about the importance of writing outside of the formal institutions in community situations. Many groups doing this work often feel isolated, believing they are the only ones doing this work. This was the second event and they aim to make it an annual do for community based writing and publishing groups throughout Canada.

Two main events

There were two main events, the first being a public reading. Reading Fed material among the pink and grey air-conditioned conference rooms of the hotel felt a bit surreal but it went down well. Of course I was at a definite advantage here, being able to choose from the rich and diverse work produced over the last 30 years. This included work by Alan Gilbey, Vivian Usherwood, Doug Mellor, Pat Smart, Chris Curley, Olive Rogers, John Langley, Arthur Thickett, Riziki Saburi, Muna Jama, Rita Betts, Michael A Bates, Mike Hoy and an anonymous one from Survivors Poetry Scotland. The Centre for Literacy is currently planning to publish this writing in its newsletter.

On the Saturday we all met up at the Centre for Literacy in Dawson College where we all spoke about and reflected on our different experiences of writing and community publishing. During the meetings I made contact with a number of groups that should be of interest to us.

The Centre for Literacy itself is a resource centre that loans materials out to schools, educational institutions and other groups. They are currently developing resources for the different Native Indian communities in Canada. They also run conferences and publish *Literacy Across the Curriculum, linking literacy in schools, community and the workplace*. Linda spoke about producing the book *Drawing: a link*

to *Literacy* that includes both painting/drawing and text by adult learners as a new way into learning.

Living Traditions Writers Group work in native communities, teaching writing as a tool for honouring the past and healing the present. They develop writing in schools, clubs and communities. Larry Loyie and Constance Brissenden (partners who met in a writing group) talked about the development of Larry's play *Ora Pro Nobis (Pray for Us)* which has been performed in many communities and prisons in Canada and had on occasions caused a virtual riot. Searching for your voice rather than writing to please, and facing up to the pain in the past, was a difficult process for Larry who thinks in native language but is trying to develop the skills to translate these into English. Discovering original Cree stories is especially hard because many many have been corrupted by biblical stories.

East End Literacy (Toronto) are an adult literacy organisation that did student publishing, writing by and for adult learners, in the 1980's and 90's but mainly concentrate on teaching now. Learners work closely with volunteers and staff in producing books. They have developed a number of long-term workshops that supported individuals to write about difficult experiences. Michael Moore read stories about emigrating from the Caribbean, being gay, and rape, among others. On the Saturday the group discussed how far students write what they think their tutor (or perceived audience) wants them to.

Impressive first performance

Worthy Writers are part of the NDG Anti-Poverty Group, one of a blossoming number of writing groups in this part of Montreal. Facilitator Gilles Chiasson is working with, or knew of at least five writing groups in this one area of Montreal. Gilles described the group as 'a small, shy, but dedicated group who have begun to learn how to create a true commodity from their own words. People who once might have been overlooked because of their poverty are now being heard and noticed.' Gilles thought this sort of writing was 'not political, but mentally healthy and that has political repercussions.' We heard from readers Llona Arndt (making an impressive first performance), Jill Marie Landon and George Apostolatas. George had not written until he retired but has now written over 2,000 poems. He was first inspired by the death of his dog Napoleon:

Napoleon Bonaparte was just a
Little upstart (or fart) who nearly
Took the world apart

Now if my tenacious or noble
Dog his counterpart was in Bonaparte's
Shoes he would have never met his
Waterloos.

Linking anti-poverty and writing makes a lot of sense to these groups. It's certainly something the Fed and its groups should consider (re-discover?) in future projects.

Also at the conference were Mary Breen and Ed Thomas from Fed members Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre (OWAC). Their readings were from the different histories they have produced and included the experiences of Chinese-Canadians, ghost stories, and altering the words of Church Hymns to get your message across. They spoke about the forthcoming *Worker's Thirst for Knowledge*, about literacy and the labour movement, looking at how workers have learned to read and communicate in the past. Ed read from his *The Crest of the Mountain*, a history of his local union and made the case for workers writing the history of their own unions. He's also written *A Worker's Guide to Doing A Local Union's History* and is currently working on a book about monuments dedicated to workers killed on the job.

Development

Lon Dubinsky spoke about his work with the 'Reading the Museum' project with the Canadian Museums Association whereby community groups, literacy classes, and writers are writing their own guides to museums from their own points of view. This was helping to open up museums to new audiences. Lon felt the Fed could develop this type of work here and was surprised that museum administrators had not been in touch with writing groups given that they have recently held a conference on 'museums and social inclusion'.

At the Friday event a group from an adult education centre came along to launch their book, *Not for Marks*, a collection of writing by adult students developed from the class group tutored by Isa Heathfield. Also on the Saturday another group came along and read their work out, a good finale to the meeting.

I got a bit of time to walk around the streets, get a

feel for the city and visit a few places. Ecomusée du fier monde is a museum of labour in converted public baths in the Centre-Sud working class area of Montreal. They had produced a book of writing about work in association with a local literacy centre. Arriving to meet a press conference with tables of sandwiches and grapes ('oh no, an actual punter on a Tuesday morning!') meant that I had to whiz around fast getting brief glimpses of workers, faces, and industrial factories before it all changed.

At the Museum at Point à Callieres on Montreal's port (1,000 miles inland but on the St Lawrence Seaway) you can visit some archaeological excavations of old Montreal. It traces the development of Montreal through models, exhibits and maps. The multi-media show included actors' voices of both the 'Pioneers' and Indians. Showing both sides is all very well but they seemed a bit separated without recognising the incredibly violent and unequal relations between the two.

Bi-lingualism

Getting the chance to travel you notice little things. Like hearing about bumper stickers that say 'unions – the ones that gave you the weekends'. Or the kid on the street who asked me for change – in French then English in rapid succession. Everything in Montreal is translated with the French speakers having to police the language to ensure its survival, which of course provokes some uneasiness among those non-French speakers. Symbolic of this issue, at the bottom of car number plates is written 'je me souviens' meaning 'I remember', referring to the British taking of French Canada. Luckily this wasn't held against me and I hope the Fed manages to cultivate these links.

Tom Woodin

Plus Ça Change Fed-er-ally Scrievin*

New Scottish Parliament. First Anniversary... at present dominated by Section 2A Repeal (28 to the Commons)... and other trivia... but this trivia takes place in our "wee-pretendy-Parliament" (courtesy B. Connelly esq.)... So... so I keep hearing about social inclusion... !eh?... Demos-Kratos (People-Rule)... except where there are Focus Groups - and use the five letters of FOC-US very very carefully... and how we are G7 and other numbling trite phrases... but I do pay more attention to our Parliament rather than the oldest of Mother of Parliaments (the Althing in Iceland apart, 100 years or so earlier).

So, what lessons? Of course, I would prefer independence (from what? I ask) but devolvement of centralised government was always my first concern. Ditto for Cornwall, Anglia, The North East or West, the West Country, etc. et al. And although mistakes have been made (the over-cost is nowhere near the over-cost of the Dome, for example) in the first year, I ask how Belgium's Parliament was judged in 1831 (a year after) - remember Britain went to war in 1914 over a mere 'scrap of paper' according to the then German Chancellor.

Ignore the Suns, Mirrors, and Dirty Diggers bleatings. "Murdochs" don't like anybody to interfere with their power bases i.e. Westminster where they can influence. It is why he is opposed to the EU... not the same ability to control... and NO not FEDERALISM.

Con-Federal (look it up)

A unity of purpose and interest.

I was involved as an executive member of the breakaway Scottish Labour Party in 1975-79 - we were discussing it all a quarter of a century ago... and we got gubbed by - just about everybody because we went out with inclusion zones. Thinking the unthinkable is one thing - doing the unthinkable is NOT on.

The present debate about Section 28 (aka 2A here) is a farce. All sorts of statistics, bias, and general idiocy being banded about (complete with bus-operators referendum - Stagecoach? Stage-managed and emphasised DUM). Sum reasonable debate, most without reason or debate. As Boy George said on *Question Time*, "I'm gay, not because of promotion by teachers, but because I'm gay". I'm a hetero - because I am. And that is it. I just am.

I hope, pray, will work towards, believe it will be repealed to overcome bigotry... but it's a warning - a dire one - for all other regions who dare to break away from the mob. Oh aye - be yer own man - until you are - then Wham!

An independent Alba (the White Land) means in my view that we'll have to be more responsible for our-selves - ('canny blame Englan' now') - and this I believe will make relations better - and they're not that bad at present - apart from when we gubb you at footba - (quote Keegan - *English supporters are the best in the World and Scottish are second to none* - eh? Quoi? whi?).

I am a Caled, a hard Scot from Caled-onia - not a Pict (the painted ones) nor a Gael - but a lowland Scot who would have opposed Bonnie Prince Charlie (as Glasgow did in 1745) not because he opposed German George, but because he'd as much to do with Scotland as I have with the far side of an undiscovered planet (Ur-anus in his case). He was only in Escozia for less than a year of his Italian life style. "Wull ye no' come back again..?" Ah bloody hope no' ya wee pretender.

I don't want a King (and remember Edinburgh was named after a Northumberland King. It was his burgh. Edwin. Then Anglicised.) I want an elected President of a Republic. So- ergo - I am a republican. Like Yanks and Froggies and Krauts but not like some Hibernians ('from the land of the winds'). And with a father born in Portugal, brought up in Lancashire and Glaswegian through and through, and a mother of French lineage... I am also an internationalist. Christian Socialists they were. I've followed only the latter. Great people.

So, what does that make me my fellow members? As a Scot on the Fed's Executive Committee, in a largely Anglo-organisation?

Proud to be a worker writer, hoping to get published in my community and very pleased to be a part of our Federation. No con.

!OK?

*writing

Eric D Davidson

Dumfries & Galloway Survivors' Poetry

Appeal For Books and Magazines

Last summer I was a volunteer with an organisation called UNIPAL, teaching English to kids in a refugee camp summer school in Rafah, in the south of the Gaza Strip. This year I am going back as one of the project co-ordinators, looking after a group of volunteers.

While I am there this time I hope to set up a small literature club, not for the children, but for their teachers. Palestinian teachers of English, particularly in the Gaza Strip, work in isolated circumstances. They certainly have no opportunity to practice their English effectively, let alone keep up to date with current teaching ideas and methods, and of course this affects how well they can teach their pupils. Having a good command of English is crucial for Palestinians both in terms of educational opportunities, and for communication with the outside world.

I am working with one of the schools supervisors in Rafah (which is one hour south of Gaza city, on the Egyptian border) to establish a small library and book club for these teachers. (A literature club, set up by a UNIPAL volunteer some years ago, still runs at the British Council in Gaza city - unfortunately too far for the Rafah teachers to attend.) The aim, as for any book club, is for the participants to read the same book/chapter of a book at the same time, then come together to discuss it. While I am there over the summer I'll run regular sessions to get the momentum going, and a number of teachers have already committed themselves to carry it on after that.

So, we have a space (in the municipality library), committed teachers, but as yet no books...which is where I hope some of you may be able to help. I'm not asking you to empty out your bookshelves, or even for your money, but to let me know if you have any publishing or retail contacts who might be able to donate some stock. I'm looking for a wide range of books: fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry, literary criticism, English teaching theory/practice...in fact just anything which might be of interest and use. Five to ten copies of each book are needed.

We'll be able to get local press coverage in the UK, small incentive as it is. (Also, if you know of magazines who would be able to offer a year's subscription...)

Thank you!

Ayesha Walmsley
SAMPAD

You can contact Ayesha by e-mail on: squish@mail.com or at SAMPAD, Midlands Arts Centre, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham B12 9QH

For further information about UNIPAL you can go to: www.unipal.org.uk

Send books and magazines to:

Rafah Reading Group

c/o Ismail Faggawi

Schools Supervisor (English)

Education Department

UNRWA Headquarters

Gaza City

Gaza, Palestine

Via Israel



In Three and a Half Years

Towpath

Co-operative

Community Press

Having started out with a £300 grant from the Local Council, has published twelve titles...

and we have three more soon to be produced.

If you would like information about how we did it, write to Mike at PO Box 150, Wigan, Lancs WN0 0FZ enclosing a large S.A.E.

Poetry Places - Milestones Project

Travel around Britain working with writing groups? Sounds good. Just how good, I hadn't imagined. When the Federation of Worker Writers in conjunction with the Poetry Society asked me to fill a "Poetry Place", I was at first delighted, then a little apprehensive. Poetry Places is, or was, a Lottery-backed scheme whereby poets are sent out into the community, on a residency basis. Poets have been sent out to oilrigs, supermarkets, law firms, you name it. They've helped shop assistants tidy up their sonnets and briefed solicitors on line-breaks and internal rhyme.

My own brief was to facilitate writing workshops in Grimsby, Hastings, Prescott, and Sheffield, with the aim of producing four performance pieces for the Fedfest 2000 in Leicester.

Our jointly agreed theme was "Milestones".

Cold soufflé

So far, so straightforward. However, unlike other Poetry Place-holders I would be working with writing groups. So a London-based Yank expatriate is meant to venture beyond Watford to disperse her gems of wisdom to people who have already written (lots) and already, in many cases, been published? That'll go over like a cold soufflé, I thought.

Nevertheless, armed with a notebook and what I hoped was a disarming smile, I ventured into foreign (to me) territories. The natives were not unfriendly. In fact, they were some of the nicest, most interesting people I've ever met. And hospitable. I had lunch in Grimsby, coffee in Hastings, cider in Sheffield and a knockout buffet in Prescott (thank you, June and Linda). In addition, as an extra bonus, tours of Cleethorpes, Prescott Clock Museum, and Liverpool. (Thank you Maria, Pat, John S, and John IC)

What about the workshop process?

Physicalise the process

Well, we did a combination of writing and acting exercises. Looking at the exotic things you can do with a rolled-up newspaper, for example. The aim was not only to get people thinking, but to get them physically working together. I feel that if you somehow

physicalise the process of creation, centre it in the body, the work will become truer and more vivid.

That's the theory. The results were a delight.

The date of the FedFest rolled round and the groups were more than ready. Grimsby Writers performed an original fantasia on the theme of liberation, "Freedom Is"; Prescott Writers combined lyricism and farce in a lunar-inspired piece of madness called "Humped, Dumped, and Bin-bagged"; Heeley Writers presented poems and songs as performed by wayfarers on a real and metaphorical highway, and Hastings brought us the last News at Ten broadcast in the Universe: "Carry on, Apocalypse."

Personally, I've come away from the project feeling I have four homes-away-from-London. I learned a lot more about the pacing and the varied approaches required in workshops, and I've gained a great affection and respect for the Federation and the people in it.

Thank you all.

Anne Rouse

An Evening with Shorelink Community Writers

Shorelink present an evening of Poetry Readings, Performances and a Short Presentation about the group and our work On Saturday 22nd July 2000 from 7pm at, White Lodge, 347-349 London Road, St. Leonards, East Sussex (Opposite St. Matthew's Church Hall)

If you wish to attend contact
Ashley Jordan, Shorelink, 25 Cumberland Road, Sidley,
East Sussex TN39 5BU
01424 730647

Call for papers and presentations

Working-Class Studies: Memory, Community and Activism

The 5th Biennial Conference of the Centre for Working-Class Studies* at Youngstown State University, May 16-19 2001, Youngstown, Ohio, USA

Working-class studies has never been simply academic. Scholarship in working-class studies often focuses on the community, and some of the most important and interesting work on class is being done not in universities but by public historians, community organisations, activists and organisers. Increasingly, we hope, working-class studies will offer a model for crossing the usual boundaries between academic and community life. At the next Center for Working-Class Studies Conference, we will explore some of the ways that academics, activists and organisers are making working class culture a public activity.

We invite proposals from students, workers, faculty, organisers, and activists in all fields from literature to geography, history to filmmaking, union organising to neighbourhood activism. Along with papers, we invite performances, film showings, workshops, roundtables, and presentations of all kinds.

Areas of exploration include literature of or by the working-class; social, oral, labor, and working-class history; material and popular culture; current workplace issues; geography and landscape; journalism; sociology and economics; labor and museum studies; fine, graphic

and performance art; multiculturalism; ethnography, biography, autobiography; pedagogy; and personal narratives of work.

Presenters should describe their projects with suggested presentation format. proposals should be between 250 and 300 words and must be received by January 1st, 2001. Address written correspondence to:

Sherry Linkon
Biennial Conference
Center for Working-Class Studies
Youngstown State University
Youngstown, Ohio 44555
USA
Phone: (001) 330 742 2976
e-mail: jrusso@cc.yosu.edu
The CWCS website is located at
www.as.yosu.edu/~cwcs/ and its discussion group
at CWCS-L@ysub.yosu.edu .

*The Center for Working-Class Studies are Reciprocal Members of the FWWCP. See Issue no. 18 for tales of the Fed members' visit and performance at the Conference in June 1999.

Work, Employment and Society Conference 2001

Winning and Losing in the New Economy, September 11-13, 2001, University of Nottingham

Proposed themes include: The Redistribution of Labour; Emotional Labour; the Historical Meanings of Work; Working (Up A) Class Identity; Risk, Flexibility, Insecurity; Stress and Work Intensification; Regulating the Market; Representations of Labour.

Further suggestions for themes and panels are welcome.

Send abstracts of papers of not more than 300 words to the conference organisers, closing date is April 20, 2001.

For more details contact:

Linda Poxon
School of Sociology and Social Policy
University of Nottingham
University Park
Nottingham
NG7 2RD
Phone: 0115 951 5407
e-mail: linda.poxon@nottingham.ac.uk

The People's Geography Project

The People's Geography Project is a new nationwide (USA) project designed to popularise radical and critical geography and to forge links between activist groups and academic geographers. The Project is organised around the following statement:

In the struggle for social and economic justice, a People's Geography commits us to under standing how everyday life is structured through complex relations of power that are fundamentally geographical. Further, the People's Geography Project understands that knowing the ways that peoples' own geographies are constructed, and knowing how they change, is vital to progressive political organizing. Over the past three decades, geographers have developed an impressive array of analytical, theoretical, and empirical tools for understanding the complex geography of everyday life; yet, these tools are little known outside the walls of the discipline. While there have been countless, and important, local political and policy interventions by critical and radical geographers, interventions that have drawn on the latest radical geographical insights, the findings of critical and radical geography as a whole have not suffused into popular consciousness.

The People's Geography Project has several short and long-range goals, including:

- Producing popular accounts (both written and filmed) of the social geography of the United States.
- Producing popular, easily understandable, and compelling accounts of contemporary, critical approaches to geographical knowledge.
- Developing curricula for both K-12 and college-level courses.
- Supporting young scholars, both pre- and post-doctoral, in the development of new, critical, and eventually popular approaches to pressing geographical problems and issues.
- Creating active links with community organisations, labor unions, and social movements to move geographical knowledge out of the academy and "into the streets", as well as to learn from those organisations, unions, and movements about how they actively construct and contest the geographical structures that govern their lives.
- Working in solidarity with other projects-academic or otherwise-across the United States and around the world.

These goals are being pursued most immediately in three related projects:

- Geography for Beginners. We are writing a volume for possible publication in the popular "For Beginners" comic book series. What better way to get complex arguments about power and geography across in an accessible and engaging way?
- People's Geography Web Page. We expect to have an early version of the page up by the end of summer 2000. The page will present the goals of the project, provide links to likeminded groups and organisations, and have a feature that allows people to "diagnose" the nature of the geographies within which they live.
- The People's Geography of the United States. This will be one or more, well illustrated and plainly written volumes designed to tell the social geography of the United States from the bottom up. The ultimate goal is to transform the telling of this social geography into a series of documentaries.

These goals and projects are being pursued by a collective of more than a dozen radical and critical geographers working and teaching in locations from Vermont to California.

For more information about the People's Geography Project, including a list of "People's Geographers" working near you, contact:

Don Mitchell
Department of Geography
Syracuse University
Syracuse, NY 13244, USA
phone: (001) 315 443 3679
fax: (001) 315-443-4227
e-mail: dmmitc01@maxwell.syr.edu

Don Mitchell, Director

This article first appeared in the Spring 2000 edition of Working Class Notes, published by The Center for Working Class Studies, Youngstown, Ohio

Is there Poetry in Sport?

The answer has to be YES!

With the shocking revelation that Tony Adams was reading *HenryV* before the Portugal-England game, it may be 'interesting' to note that there is a new team in the California League of Baseball (equal to our Third Division in football), whose name derives from a poem, *Casey at the Bat*, namely the Mudville Nine, based in Stockton. Ernest Lawrence Thayer wrote the poem in 1888, which begins like this:



The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day;
The score stood four to two with but one inning more to play.
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,
A sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

It continues inexorably for many more verses!

Also, in the same League are the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes, unfortunately not named after the Frank Zappa album, but who play their baseball at The Epicenter. So who said the Americans have no irony.

Tim 'anorak' Diggles

Everyone deserves more than fifteen minutes of fame

Eastside Community Heritage is something different. Our mission is simple, we exist to help you write the stories that matter, to help you record your life's contribution, adding it to a creative archive of memories that will inspire and inform generations to come. To date we've produced six publications -

The Way We Were (£2.95), recalls life in East and West Ham. ***On the Broadway*** (£2.95) tells the story of St. John's Church, a notable landmark. ***Newham Women*** (£3.95) is the story of fourteen local women, whose experiences document and celebrate the changes and challenges that have faced women for generations. ***Earlham Grove Shul*** (£12.99) is a powerful look at the history of Newham's Jewish Community.

Hidden Lives: ***Stories of the East End*** (£6.50) is a lively and exciting look at the experiences of the residents of 42 Ballam Street, Plaistow.

So whether you want to be in our next publication or would like to buy a book (add 50p p&p per title), contact us on 020 8557 8609 or 020 8519 1827. You can write to us with your memories at:

**Eastside Community Heritage,
The Old Town Hall,
29 The Broadway, Stratford,
London E15 4BQ**

Toufann and Translations

presenting Virahsawmy's play in London

The authors translated Dev Virahsawmy's *Toufann* into English. Their English version was performed by Border Crossings at London's Africa Centre in November / December 1999, directed by Michael Walling. What follows are several excerpts from their article – for the full article, visit the Fed's website, www.fwwcp.mcmail.com

In translating, or carrying across, Dev Virahsawmy's *Toufann* from Morisien to English, and from a Mauritian to a London performance context, we were continuing an ongoing process of dramatic evolution. Virahsawmy's play is, on one level, a deliberate recreation of Shakespeare's *Tempest* in the context of post-colonial Mauritius: although it goes far beyond the fairly straight approach to translation in his other Shakespearean pieces like *Zil Sezar* or *Trazedji Makbess*. It was because of *Toufann*'s (many) departures from *The Tempest* that it became important and exciting to present the play in London; to carry across a play originally addressed to a Mauritian audience, and re-interpret it again for today's multicultural Britain.

Performing the play in 1999, it was amazing to think that it had been written as long ago as 1991, in a country which Western people are prone to dismiss as belonging to something called "the developing world". *Toufann* is so emphatically about issues which are global today: issues which have actually resulted from that very desire to "develop" the world economically, technologically, and commercially; whatever the cost in human and ecological terms. At the centre of this process of "development" are the new technologies of computer power and electronic media thrown in for good measure.....

.....Such issues, of course, also have powerful resonances in modern London. Two days ago, the election addresses of London's mayoral candidates dropped through our letter-box. Remarkably prominent among them (and on the streets) was the candidate of the British National Party. This organization justifies itself on the grounds that "We ask for our culture, freedoms, and our traditions to be respected, and for the majority to have the right to run the country as they wish", calls for education authorities to end "multicultural indoctrination", and proclaims its "opposition to mass immigration". Such neo-fascism is not really a viable political force here, but it demonstrates clearly the cast of mind which led to such appalling events as the murder of Stephen Lawrence, and the catalogue of police failure in its investigation. Until modern London understands that it is, and has to be, a genuinely pluralistic, mixed, open space; it will continue to

be a place of fear and of irrational violence. Here again, Virahsawmy's *Toufann* carried across to England to teach its audience.....

.....The final performance of our *Toufann* was on December 18th 1999. The previous night, in Mauritius, the government had passed a Public Security Act, which essentially gave it the powers of a State of Emergency on an ongoing basis. In particular, the act placed severe limits on freedom of expression. In a peaceful protest against this legislation at the Port-Louis Theatre, seven people, including members of Ledikayson Pu Travayer (the organisation which campaigns for the adoption of Morisien as the national language, and which publishes much of Virahsawmy's work) were arrested. Of course, one can understand how the riots have disturbed the authorities. There are two ways to respond to this. They could repress all voices in the hope of silencing them for ever. Or they could, like Virahsawmy, open up a space in which every Mauritian voice has the right to be heard, and every human being is considered worthy of representation. Our hopes and prayers are for the latter course.

Michael & Nisha Walling
London, April 2000

Hand in Hand Update

Time is running out! Hand in Hand, the Fed's three-year Lottery-funded training project, is now well into its third year and is due to finish in March 2000. We are busy fundraising for a new training-related project to follow up Hand in Hand, but if your group hasn't yet benefitted from the project's FREE training schemes and courses, now's your chance.

Hand in Hand is funded to provide training for Fed member groups in marketing, publicity, fundraising, financial and organisational skills (the project is *not* funded to provide training in *creative writing*). It aims to help members develop skills, such as fundraising and planning, which will be useful in running and sustaining their groups.

Hand in Hand tries to work in partnership with Fed groups to provide training they really want and need. The training includes **large-scale training schemes**, **weekend residential courses**, and **short-term, tailor-made training for individual groups**.

Coming up for 2000-2001 we have:

■ **Selling Your Books**, residential weekend course, 1 and 2 July, Leicester University. In response to popular demand – everything you need to know about selling, marketing and distributing your group's books. Led by Ian Daley of Yorkshire Art Circus. (FULLY BOOKED).

■ **The Internet and Community Publishing**, residential weekend course, 23 and 24 September 2000, venue to be confirmed. The internet is about people not computers! *Not* an introduction to browsing the web, *not* an introduction for writers simply wanting to publish their own work on the web – but a course exploring the potential of the web as a communications tool to share experiences, strengthen communities of writers, and offer a new medium for publishing group newsletters and pamphlets. Led by David Parrish of Password Training. (Contact Christine for more details or to pre-book your place).

■ **Final weekend residential course**, 27 and 28 January 2001, Wedgwood College. The theme for this final training weekend is still under discussion – watch this space!

■ **Training the Trainers**, September 2000, ongoing. A programme of training days for Fed members who are interested in developing their training skills for use in the community. (Details to be circulated to groups shortly, or contact Christine for more information).

■ **Training Handbook**, available September 2000. A FREE resource pack of practical information, step-by-step quick guides, and personal accounts by Fed members.

■ **Helping Hand**, ongoing. The successful mentoring/coaching scheme which offers short bursts of specialised training to individual groups – it can make a real difference to your group. (Contact Christine for details of the scheme).

Funding is also still available for the Fed to work with a group or groups on one more large-scale training project. This could involve your group planning and taking part in a training project over several months. Each project is unique, as it is designed to reflect the needs of a particular community. If you are interested, even if you don't have any clear ideas at this stage, do contact Christine.

Do get in touch if you have any thoughts, ideas, queries about how your group could be involved, or if you want to know more about any of these projects:

Christine Bridgwood
Training Development Coordinator
Kynance
Albert Street
Stone
Staffs.
ST15 8HQ.
Tel/fax 01785 286 177
email handinhand@cwcom.net

Birth Announcement

To Sarah and Richard
a daughter
Shona Hope Richardson
McKeever
born on 5th January 2000 at 2.35am,
Barnet General Hospital.
Weight 6lb 6oz, Length 56cm,
blue eyes and mid brown wavy hair

2000AGM New Exec/New Members

2000-01 Executive Committee Elections

A new Executive Committee was elected at the FWWCP AGM, which took place during the Festival at Leicester.

The officer posts were uncontested, but Twelve candidates stood to be the committee members, which shows a healthy interest in being part of the decision making process of the Fed. The Committee for 2000-01 is as follows:

Chair -

Richard McKeever, Working Press, London

Vis Chair -

Arthur Thickett, QueenSpark Books, Brighton

Honorary Secretary -

Louise Glasscoe, Commonword, Manchester

Honorary Treasurer -

Alvin Culzac, Shorelink Writers, Hastings

Federation Magazine Editor -

Nick Pollard, Heeley Writers, Sheffield

Committee Members -

Andrea Chell, Leeds Survivors' Poetry

Eric Davidson, Dumfries and Galloway SP

Vie Gray, Ethnic Communities Oral History Project, London

Tony Guest, Heeley Writers

Siobhan Harkin, Survivors' Poetry Scotland

Fitz Lewis, Gatehouse Books, Manchester

A vote of thanks was given to those who stood down, especially to Pat Smart who was Chair.

The dates of Executive Committee meetings have been set for 2000-01, and any member is welcome to attend and participate, they are:

July 15th in Manchester

September 30th in Lockerbie

January 13th in Tunstall

March 10th in London

The 2001 AGM will be at The University of Leicester on Saturday April 21st.

Contact the FWWCP office on 01782 822327 or fwwcp@cwcom.net, for further details.

Member Groups Ratified

The following groups were ratified as FWWCP Full members:

Bromley-by-Bow Centre, London

Fulham & Chelsea Survivors Poetry

Grimsby Writers

Leeds Survivors Poetry

The following groups were ratified as FWWCP Associate Members:

CREAFI, Lille

Forengen Arbtskriven, Sweden

Fritz-Huser Institute, Dortmund

Kensington Welfare Rights Union, Philadelphia

Pig Iron Press, Youngstown, Ohio

Sedgwick Cultural Center, Philadelphia

The following groups were ratified as FWWCP First Chapter Members:

C3A Creative Writers, Newcastle under Lyme

Cambridge Writers

Eastside Community Heritage, Stratford, London

Gallery Poets, Solihull

Project 101, Accrington

Rotherham Metro Writers

Roti Writers, Hackney

SAMPAD, Birmingham

Towpath Community Co-op Press, Wigan

Wordshare, Glasgow

The following organisations were ratified as FWWCP Reciprocal Members:

Academi, Wales

Center for Working Class Studies, Youngstown

Foundation for Community Dance, UK

NUJ Book Branch, UK

R E V I E W S

Diary of a Schizophrenic

by **Angie Hart**

isbn 1 9010 4505 6

£3.50 available from:

**Leeds Survivors Poetry Press,
54B Sholebroke Avenue, Leeds LS7 3HB**

Angie's style is direct and generally free-form. But she can catch you out. Just round the corner from a simple expression lies the stark coldness of the suffering.

A gift of this book is that you can fully sense the indignity and despair but it's served up lightened by style, the irony of her viewpoint and the glimpses of the surreal.

Schizophrenic City

The woman in the next bed comes in for a tin of baked beans in a pair of paranoid jeans Aching from side-effects.

Joins the queue,
gets to the front, says
'No Largactil tonight',
forgetting
she's in the corner shop

Untitled

She had sex with Patrick for a cigarette,
She confided in me,
When I went down the long corridor to visit her.

And the gas-man raped her at sixteen
She was screaming when her parents came home.
That was why she was in here.

There's a story in that somewhere

This second edition is completely revised and reprinted. It is well presented with good print quality enhanced by a level of illustration and by the uncompromising cover.

Read it and open another door.

Tony Guest

Hard Stuff

Hard Stuff

HI Rise Publications

2 Netherdene Rd

Dronfield

Sheffield S18 1TR

ISBN 09535701 8 £1

No giggling knicker-wetting joy
No skinny ribs to xylophone
No soft hair on little pillows
Now that time is past
(There will be)

The result of writing workshops for the families and friends of drug users, this anthology of (mostly) poems deals with the often unheard stories of those whose lives are messed up by living with drug users. There is a lot of anguish, but also humour:

Letter of Complaint

To Messrs Life & Fate
Re item received in sixty eight
According to the manual I see
It should soon be looking after me.

But it only functioned sixteen years
Before the major faults appeared
We really should have sent it back
Now it only runs on Smack.

It causes grief and pain and strife
Wasn't there a Guarantee - for Life?

A collection which will reach out to users and the people working and living around them.

Chas Trent

R E V I E W S

French
Connections

Available from TEC/CRIAC, 64 Bld de
Strasbourg, 591000 Roubaix, France, each
books costs 10FF

C'est pas tout rose et violette

"I write to live my life, to tame it, to open it up, to make it mine, I write as I breathe, through urgent necessity, all or nothing, denial or defiance." So begins the brief preface from Colette Nys-Mazure to this poetry collection of competition winners, writing on the world of work in its widest sense. Interesting, therefore, that no poem here reflects the enjoyment of work, rather work is a form of extinction in Vanderplancke's Desesperance "We were! We are no more", if, waiting for Billaut's Train-Train Quotidien, you get there at all. Around the time I received this review copy, Ian Dury's Desert Island Discs reprised the week of his death. In the programme he told how his lyrical inspiration came from hearing the term "barnet" (Barnet Fair: hair), here also in Nadine Baillieu's Petite Musique de Vie poetry draws its inspiration from going to the hairdressers. How would you like yours?

*Le Forcene Du Boulot (Work Crazy) by
Didier Daeninckx*

...is something of a contrast, being one of two thought provoking short stories, in which unemployed protesters take direct action to assert the dignity of their labour. It is followed by Robin des Cites, an urban twist on the tale of Robin Hood, against the background of a local politician's attempt to rid the town of crime by demolishing the 1960's tower block housing in which the poorest people live.

*La Voix qui les faisait toutes (The Voice
who does them all) by Jacques Jouet*

A darkly humorous interview with the radio personality who it turns out has supplied us with all the voices of the age, from De Gaul to Lady Di, Mitterand to Jacques Brel.

Le Mai, Le Joli Mai, by Michel Quint

...a short novella in which a film producer returning to Roubaix meets an old flame and relives the

events of May 68, in the course of which he questions exactly what it was all about ...

These four little books, jointly published by TEC/CRIAC with VO Editions and Editions Sansonnet, are all great examples of well written, pacy, political writing. Small, pocket sized books, mostly illustrated (I like the woodcut style pictures in Le Forcene Du Boulot and the comic-book illustrations of Le Mai, Le Joli Mai), they are designed to be read, enjoyed, passed on, and to provoke, tease, challenge in a way that not enough working class writing, this side of La Manche, attempts to do.

Nick Pollard

Young Asian
Voices

Yuv-Vani

Sampad c/o mac, Cannon Hill Park
Birmingham B12 9QH

e-mail: sampad@compuserve.com

"It's a privilege to be someone different/ You may have some more flavour to add," concludes one of Rishav Datt Agnihotry's poems in this collaboration between Sampad and young writers (aged 10-21) from the Gitanjali Multilingual Literary Circle. And it's true, these poems bounce with the fresh audacity of young writing fingers – "Come live with me and be my love/ and we will all the pleasures prove./ I'll dump my wife and chuck her out/ You are my chosen one, no doubt" Chaitali Desai pastiches Marlowe.

Each poet's selection is prefaced with a short introduction listing their influential authors. Many of these choices (except perhaps, the prizewinning novelist Sigmund Freud) reflect the school curriculum, but some writers also mention learning from each other. Most of all, these young writers are clearly enjoying themselves writing, and this shines through their poems.

Nick Pollard

R E V I E W S

Gibbous Moon

Poems and Stories by Drumchapel Writers
Group

2 Port Dundas Place

Glasgow

G2 3LW

ISBN 0902303 33 3 £2

A man trading in scold's bridles, being offered your own wheel hubs in the second hand market, the pursuit of demons while parents are out on a Saturday night, odes to elephants, peacocks, and a couple to the Clyde, this anthology is bustling full of Glaswegian interest and humour. Christina Byrne's short, sharp 'Shoplifting' has a particularly neat twist, but there is plenty here to enjoy, written with a strong sense of place.

Chas Trent

Double Rasher

'Bringing home the Bacon' and 'Ramblings'

by John Stockdale

Atlantic View Publishing Company

53 Upper Albert Rd

Sheffield S8 9HT

e-mail: j.stockdale@glass-ts.com

An often mischievous collection of poems which have recently been amusing Sheffield audiences, Bringing Home the Bacon contains such gems as "Spectacles, Testicles, Wallet and Watch, or the Rabbi", "Virtual Love" and "The Demon Wink". Stockdale revels in being naughty, but intersperses this with intimacies like "If I should live to be a hundred take a rope and cut me free" cataloguing the struggle of looking after an ailing father, or the brutal disappointment in a slow return home in 'Pigeon'.

The short stories in Ramblings are excellent, economically written but with intense detail and emotion drawn out of small but significant incidents: testing a knife's sharpness on the hairs of a son's arm (Sharpening Up One's Act), going fishing (The Satchel). Others reveal a generous sense of humour – the catastrophic descent of a cast iron bath, the note for the milkman portending the worst you can imagine. Stockdale's work has a strong humanist feel.

Nick Pollard

nomad 8

The Language Issue, available from:

Survivors' Poetry Scotland

30 Cranworth St., Hillhead

Glasgow G12 8AG

52pp £2.50

nomad magazine continues to offer a remarkable collection of writing, well presented in its square format, clear to read, and most important, full of good writing. Contributors include major names like Jackie Kay alongside first time authors.

Issue no.8 is sub-titled the language issue, and this comes across strongly in the selection. I especially enjoyed *Fields* by Byron Beynon, where he describes some of the celtic languages in a set of six very different poems, here is the sixth:

Wesh

The field of seven pure vowels,
a precise iaith under threat
broadcasting the hours on radio and television;
words searched like clues,

a skeleton stained with red ochre,
the weight of ritual and a company of stone
tools at Paviland. I listen for the music of Cymraig
on streets, voices on leaves, the house poets

keeping alive a legacy of bro.
A complex, swift people,
the fluent sun early rising, with intonation
contending the resolute course of time.

nomad is great value and always full of surprises, and is open to all to contribute to. The next issue is devoted to gardens and subheaded *Paradise*. Also, there is a good selection from nomad on the SPS website, www.spscot.co.uk.

Kevin V. Reid



FED 25

In 2001, the FWWCP will be 25 years old. Quite an achievement for such a small organisation, but it should not come as any surprise, because the people who have cared for and helped the Fed from Day One, are people who believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to have their voice heard, and dedicate themselves towards that aim. Getting to 25 has been hard work for many hundreds of people, and they should be justly proud of their achievement.

2001 will be a time for celebration, reflection, and looking forward.

The focus of the celebration will obviously be the 2001 Fedfest, taking place between April 20th and 22nd at the University of Leicester.

During the Festival, we plan an evening of readings and stories from the past 25 years. One piece for each year, and we want you to choose which pieces of writing to use. It could be a poem or piece of prose, your own memory of someone or something associated with the Fed, whether a writer, how a group started, a memorable performance, organiser, event, whatever! We would like to hear from you what you have, what your ideas are. For instance, were you at the inaugural meeting? At the first AGM? What were the hopes and aspirations for the organisation in the early 80's? We need to hear from you.

We may even have enough information for a book or special issue of this magazine.

Alongside these live pieces, we are looking for photographs, letters, and publications, for an exhibition at the Festival. We already have a lot of information, but we need photographs especially of the 1970's and 80's.

Do not send your valuable photos, magazines or books now, let us know what you have, and we can gather it all together closer to the time.

Please contact us as soon as possible, at FWWCP, 67 The Boulevard, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6BD or e-mail fwwcp@cwcom.net, we look forward to hearing from you.



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The deadline for submission of articles or reviews for consideration for Issue No.21 is 26 September 2000.

Send copy to the address below, preferably on disk or by e-mail. Send books for review asap.

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