

To achieve this gratuitous kill-us-all-ten-times, (We ain't cats. We don't have no nine lives, mister) we have locked into that arsenal enough wealth properly to feed the one third of the world's population who are at this moment as you read, starving, or suffering the multiplicity of disease brought about by poverty and long-term malnutrition.

When facts like these go mostly unnoticed, the challenge is to discover ways which are in themselves peaceful and life enhancing, to let pupils - to let anybody - enlighten themselves. The challenge is to make learning structures in which people can reach their own sane conclusions about how they are to conduct their lives, in the light of the facts.

What follows is an account by a worker in the Peace Education Project, James McCarthy, of just one small educational experiment among the many being introduced by his organisation.

Gaie Houston

James McCarthy

AGENDA CONFERENCE

Put 30 young people from three countries together in a large house in rural Surrey, feed them with facts and views on war, racism, appropriate technology and environmental destruction, and invite them to establish and present their views on the kind of world they would like to inhabit in 20 years' time - and what do you get?

By the end of the Agenda conference when participants were making their presentations, it was clear there was enough vitality, enthusiasm and commitment in the first three days of the event to prove that our gamble had been well worth taking. A gamble partly for financial reasons - the sponsoring organisations have still not received the promised grant from the Greater London Council on which the event was based; but also because we could never be certain we had provided the right kind of format to entice 14 to 18-year olds to forgo £20 and up to a week of their holidays for what amounted to several days of hard work. In the end all seemed to have thoroughly enjoyed the week, and many of us had learnt a great deal as well.

Activities began somewhat incongruously with a reception at London's County Hall, and ended with a trip to the Easter demonstrations at Burghfield, Aldermaston and Greenham Common. The intervening days spent at an inner London school's residential annex at Hurtwood, near Dorking, were organised round a workshop format, with a day spent looking at interpersonal and small group conflicts and two days studying war and other 'big' conflict issues. The structure we provided - that of resource people being interviewed by small groups of participants - proved flexible and stimulating to both sides, and meant that each topic could be covered in some depth by those most interested in it. The wide spread of resource people - from the British Atlantic Committee to Youth CND, from an ex-conscientious objector to the Coalition for Peace through Security - meant that a real choice of alternatives was available, while the presence of people from Friends of Israel and the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, Tools for Self-Reliance, World Federalists, Friends of the Earth and the Commission for Racial Equality prevented debate being narrowly confined to militarism and the arms race.

Other points of view were provided by women from Greenham Common, a Quaker and a race relations worker from south London, and in films, theatre, and literature provided by the week's sponsors. Jeremy Paxman, a BBC reporter who had recently covered wars in Afghanistan, Zimbabwe and central America, spoke forcefully in a plenary session of the apparent need for violence to achieve justice in many Third World situations. The heated discussion following this talk, and that the previous day on nuclear power, brought out the familiar problem of the dominance of English speakers in multinational conferences - a difficulty which was reduced by the method of working in small groups for the rest of the week. Here the discussions between English, Swedes and the one German participant were lively and involving. The whole week was recorded on video, partly by the participants themselves, and it is intended to make the edited tape available to interested groups; there will also be a full written report.

One thing that emerged from the week was the readiness of Swedish schools to be involved in peace activities. Teaching the values of peace, along with those of democracy, is spelt out as a requirement of teachers in the Swedish Ministry of Education's official handbook. In many schools there are Youth for Peace groups and in the Stockholm and Gothenburg areas these meet regularly on a demonstration in the centre of Stockholm which attracted widespread attention. It was heartening to hear of such activities in a country which is not part of either major military bloc. And next year, it was agreed at the conference, there will be another Agenda event in Sweden.

It will take place in Stockholm from April 23rd-29th. It is hoped there will be a substantial British contingent, as well as young people from many other European countries.

The Peace Education Project, one of the sponsors of the above conference, is the educational wing of the pacifist Peace Pledge Union. Working mainly in secondary schools, the project offers young people the chance to explore their feelings about war, violence and the possibility of non-violent social change through talks, courses, teachers' workshops and printed materials. The project is keen to develop a variety of approaches to teaching conflict resolution in schools.

**Contact: Peace Education Project, 6 Endsleigh Street, London W.C.1
(01-387 5501)**

THE ISIS CENTRE

HOLISTIC HEALTH WORKSHOP

directed by
Dr Richard James

One year part-time course
starts Oct 1983.
Also short courses.

ROOMS FOR HIRE

for individual or group work,
in easy reach of Central London.

Send SAE for programme of workshops
and details of individual sessions
in psychotherapy and alternative
medicine.

The Isis Centre for Holistic Health, 362 High Road, London N17.
phone 01-808 6401