

Editorial

This volume appears as a special issue, devoted to aspects of Morris and Education. I first proposed the idea of such a collection of papers a few years ago. In discussing it with publishers one informed me that Morris was far too outdated to be of any relevance to contemporary educational debate, while another (a reputable leftwing publisher, it should be said) considered Morris's educational ideas rather "too Nineteen Sixties" for these "post-modern times". Convinced that this was not so, and that Morris's contribution to the wider debate about how we learn and what we learn is of the greatest significance, I pursued the proposal. It was a matter of great fortune that Peter Faulkner, the editor of *The Journal*, was most supportive of the proposal and gave his enthusiastic co-operation to the project of the current special issue.

The varied contents of the articles reflect well the breadth of educational vision which Morris offers us. Morris's thoughts on utopian education; the legacy of Morrisian thought in relation to contemporary literacy theory, storytelling, and the teaching of English Literature in the universities; Morris as political educator; Morris's views on technical education and their practical application in relation to contemporary arts and crafts teaching. The collection begins with a piece from Morris himself, showing as only he could the depth of his contempt for Victorian schooling.

The critique which runs through these articles applies beyond the age of Gradgrind in which it was first expressed. These are bleak times for education and the dark shadows of the Victorian schoolroom threaten those progressive developments which have been hard fought for in our own century. As savage cuts limit adult and free further and higher education; as schools are forced towards vocational training, text-book parrot-learning and a national curriculum which is all too often a narrowly nationalist curriculum; and as an ideological vacuum born out of the anarchy of the 'new world order' gives rise to the theoretical despair of post-modernist intellectual fragmentation, there can hardly be a better time to re-inject into the educational debate the principle of hope.

Readers will be interested in the newly-published William Morris Library produced by Thoemmes Press. One excellent volume from this series, from which our introductory Morris article is taken, will be reviewed in the next issue. The number of relevant articles for this special issue has, unfortunately, crowded out book reviews, and several have been held over for the next issue. New reviewers for books, as well as suggestions for books to be reviewed, are always welcome and letters on these matters should be addressed to me at 71 Antrim Mansions, Antrim Road, London NW3 4XL. On the subject of proposals, I should mention that a conference commemorating the centenary of Morris's death is being organised to take place at Exeter College, Oxford from 27–30 June, 1996; proposals for conference papers should be sent to Peter Preston at Kelmscott House, marked '1996 Conference'.

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