

June 1913



Headteacher's log

Monday 16

Ms Oakenstaff arrived at school today in the funereal black that she wore on Saturday for the funeral of fellow suffragette Emily Davison, who died under the King's horse in the Derby. I took no action, thinking it best to let my Deputy's grief blow itself out. However, I am concerned about the possible effect on school discipline, which is currently a great public worry. Our MP, Mr Marshmind, recently returned from two weeks in St Helena, and reported that there was no binge drinking, female militancy, football hooliganism, strikes or war-fever. 'This must be,' he said, 'because their schools are better than ours.'

Tuesday 17

Read a letter in assembly from Bishop Potsmoker, who has belatedly heard about the meteorite that fell through our roof in the Easter holidays. One has to be thankful that the incident happened when the school was empty; almost as if astronomical time worked with the dating of Easter to ensure that no lives were lost. But it was surely the grace of God that prevented the building from taking fire from the hot space missile. In his letter of condolence Dr Potsmoker, a strong liberal in theology, assured me that the incident was 'just one of those things.'

Wednesday 18

Susan Gripewater in Y6 complained to me that her future had been put at risk by her time at

St Chryptosporidium's because three of her class teachers had obsessive personal enthusiasms. Mr Peel, she said, devoted class time to stories of his hunting, shooting and fishing. Ms Oakenstaff steered every lesson in any subject towards 'Votes for Women'. Ms Cartwright kept showing her favourite films which, being silent, provided very difficult comprehension exercises. I showed Susan her termly test results. These revealed that her attainment against national standards had risen during her years with all these teachers. There was something else I did not tell Susan. Her one year of stagnant progress had been spent with Ms Bounder (advanced skills) who lives for nothing but education, and fills her out-of-school life with courses. Teaching is a mysterious business.

Thursday 19

As a rural science specialist primary school we merited a visit by Mr Anthrax, Minister for Rural Affairs. He was thrilled by all evidences of 'nature', including the stinkhorn fungus growing through the music room floor. He sat in on lessons, and at lunchtime ate a ploughman's with the staff and told us that the school had a big part to play in the Loamshire Heritage Plan. This is a recently announced Government initiative, designed as a tourist attraction to show how Anglo-Saxons live in the 20th century. It is widely talked about in the Slimepond area. In fact I caned a boy last week for referring to his home neighbourhood as 'the Reservation'.

Friday 20

Assembly today was led by our new Christian youth worker Zip Coolman. He impressed me very much in his first visit, when he released a small gas-filled balloon from below the table on the stage, to illustrate the Resurrection. It had an anchor string, but Zip lost hold on it and it floated upwards to stick firmly to the hall ceiling. Zip's talk moved seamlessly into an explanation of our Lord's Ascension and Heavenly Session, without any sign that this was not according to plan. If he wants to become a teacher at the end of his contract, I shall put him in charge of budget management. I'm tired of pretending that changes in the curriculum due to suddenly fluctuating funding are all according to our three-year plan.

■ Leonard Bookman

