

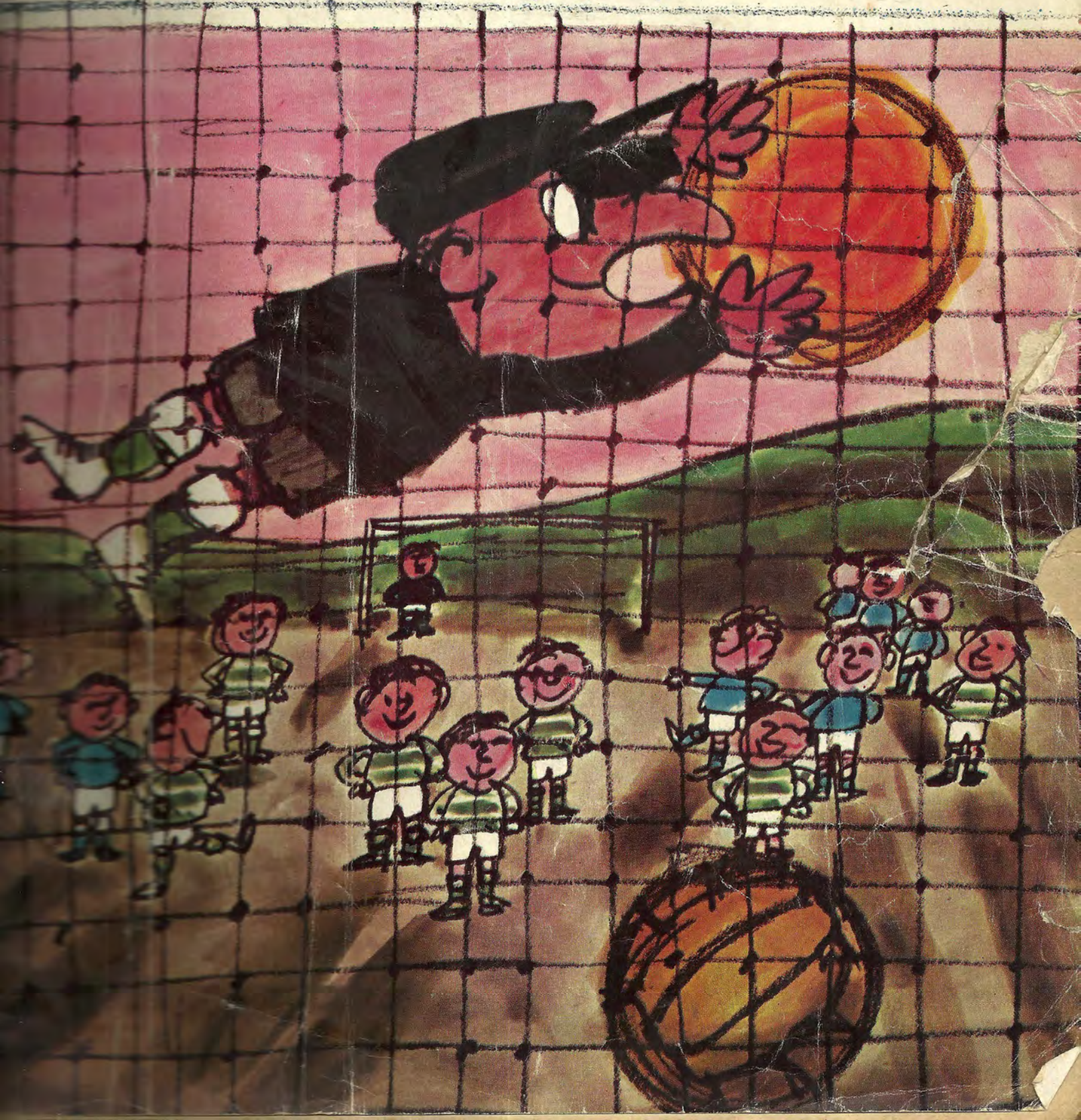
PUNCH NOVEMBER 9 1960

Vol. CCXXXIX

*With kind regards from Frank Richards*

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# Punch



*Aged 85, unmarried. Has written 26 books and 35 television plays; still publishes two new ones every year as well as the Christmas annual which enshrines his original creation, Billy Bunter. Recreations: chess, music and the classics, especially Horace and Lucretius. Here, as at the birth of Bunter, illustrated by CHARLES H. CHAPMAN, 81, still drawing, cycling and taking cold baths all the year round. He has been drawing Bunter for nearly fifty years.*

**FRANK RICHARDS**

**5**

**Minister of Education**



*The Cabinet Room at 10 Downing Street.*

*Mr. Frank Richards, Minister of Education, loquitur.*

**I**N taking up my office as Minister of Education I have pondered deeply on the need for far-reaching reforms in our educational system. I am convinced that Education need not be, as at present, a process of incarcerating young people in ugly buildings, with tired teachers and repulsive school books, and cramming reluctant young heads with generally useless knowledge. I shall endeavour to adopt the viewpoint not so much of the pedagogue as of the pupil, considering the schoolboy rather than the schoolmaster. This I acknowledge is somewhat revolutionary. But we live in an age of revolutions. Let us keep up with the times.

First of all, it is my intention to take a firm stand against the age-old superstition that young people exist chiefly for the purpose of being tormented by well-meaning elders. The urge to worry the young for their own good is latent in all of us. It seems to be ineradicable. But like other deleterious impulses it can and must be kept in check. Better for a child to drop H's than tears. Better for the boy to perpetrate howlers than to howl. Education must no longer be the Moloch on whose grisly altar the young are ruthlessly, though conscientiously, immolated. In ancient Carthage they used to tip little ones into a fiery furnace, no doubt from the best of motives. The progress of civilization has modified and mollified the method without abolishing the system, which in our own time takes the milder but still painful form of Home-work and 11-plus exams. We must progress further. These relics of barbarism I propose to abolish entirely.

Reforms are required in many other directions. It is not impossible for Education to be made attractive, even to the young. The opposite seems to have been the objective hitherto. Take, for example, the school books. We cannot wholly dispense with them. They are a necessary evil. But why make them unnecessarily repulsive? "Plain in thy neatness" may be Milton's idea of Pyrrha: but why impose

it upon young people who naturally revel in life and colour? All this will be changed. Bright-coloured jackets for all school books will in future be the rule. The boy who feels a natural sinking of the heart at the mere sight of a Virgil with its dull forbidding cover will brighten up very considerably as he looks at a vivid picture of Æneas pushing his sword through Turnus. He may even be moved to open the volume of his own accord to see what the row was about. A classic may become to him almost as attractive as a horror comic.

History will in future be taught chiefly through the medium of historical novels. It is true that fiction conveys facts inaccurately. But it does more or less convey them. Facts on their own have no appeal to the imagination without which little of a permanent nature can be accomplished. Reading *Quentin Durward* the boy will discover that Louis XI was a live human being, not merely a name and a number. *Ivanhoe* will leave in his mind a vision of Plantagenet England. Inaccurate no doubt: but it will be there. Something will be achieved: his mind will no longer be a blank on the subject.

My honourable colleagues will doubtless recall the difficulties they had, in their schoolboy days, in concealing their cribs from the gimlet eye of authority. These difficulties will not exist for the schoolboy of the future. His shining morning face will not be so often sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. He will carry his crib under his arm as openly as any less useful volume, fearless of the master's eye.

Teachers, it is said, are overworked. But is not this due, at least in part, to their general opposition to the use of cribs, the reason for which it is hard to elucidate? Actually the crib is the boy's best friend, and hardly less the teacher's. Grim grinding at a difficult passage is more likely to produce a headache than any more profitable result. It is only too liable to make the victim exclaim with Byron: "Farewell Horace, whom I hated so!" In an age of labour-saving contrivances why deprive the schoolboy of his share? A crib is like oil on troubled waters. It smooths the passage. The boy becomes in effect his own teacher. Latin without Quelch! French without Squeers!

From now on the free use of a crib will be encouraged in all schools. It will no longer be a Bohn of contention. I do not propose, at this stage, to institute Compulsory Cribbing. For the present it will be optional. But I do not doubt that the average schoolboy may be relied upon to make extensive use of such aids.

One of my earliest measures as Minister of Education will be to provide all schools with an ample supply of cribs. Admittedly there may be some backward boys who will not benefit to the full from this reform. But the backward boy is not really a problem. Let him make his own pace, and all will be well. The brightest boys in the class do not always shine with such effulgence in the big world after schooldays. On the other hand, the dunce at school may turn out an exceedingly clever fellow in later life. This is confirmed by my own experience. I was myself a dunce at school.

Music, vocal, will take a high place in the curriculum. Every boy loves to kick up a row and why should he not? It is a natural outlet for exuberant energies that might otherwise be misdirected. A boy is like a deponent verb. He may be passive in form—under his form-master's eye—but he is always active in meaning. With all his faults his school-master loves him still: but he finds it difficult to keep still. Silence is golden: but the human boy is as indifferent to such treasure as the gentleman in Horace who *ingentes oculo invetorto spectat acervos*. Pluperfect indicatives and imperfect subjunctives, taken neat, will never rouse his enthusiasm. But the pill may be coated with jam. I am considering a plan for providing Latin versions of vigorous and tuneful popular songs which boys love to bawl, for use in schools. What boy

would not enjoy singing, or shouting, say *Waltzing Matilda*, even in Latin? Or one of Mr. Gilbert's entertaining lyrics? This will enable him to realize that Latin actually is a human language with a kick in it, and by no means the dust and ashes he has supposed it to be. Something like this:

*Here the Minister of Education breaks into song, to the tune of "When I was a lad I served a term," from "H.M.S. Pinafore."*

*Versabar juvenis ego  
Procuratoris in domo,  
Verrebam muros et solum,  
Osti poliebam capulum,  
Poliebam plane capulum,  
Et nunc praefectus classis sum.*

Will not the most backward boy join joyfully in yelling the chorus:

*Osti capulum poliebat, et  
Praefectus classis nunc floret.*

And a spot of Latin will not only find admission into his thick head but will linger there.

Games, under my administration, will invariably take precedence of classes. My guiding rule will be cricket before Cicero, soccer before Sophocles, hockey before Horace. But even so simple a game as "Ducks and Drakes" will not be neglected. In these democratic days any Tom, Dick or Harry may aspire to a political career culminating in Cabinet rank, as many of my colleagues can testify. A favourable wind on the Heath may blow him into Downing Street. Any ambitious lad may end up as Chancellor of the Exchequer. In such an event proficiency in "Ducks and Drakes" will



"... to provide all schools with an ample supply of cribs."



"He's company."

enable him to carry on unchanged the traditions of that high office.

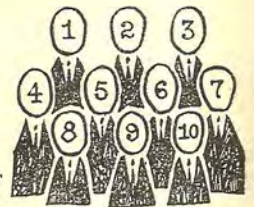
*Mens sana in corpore sano* will be the aim: but not in that order. *Corpus* must be *sanum* if *mens* is to be *sana*. Open-air activities must always take first place. Attendance in class will, therefore, be subject to the state of the weather. School

reports will be of less importance than weather reports. On fine days, which in our climate have a very considerable rarity value, all classes will be dismissed and led or driven into the open air; and there will be the young barbarians all at play. Teachers will have a rest from their pupils: pupils from their teachers. Both will benefit enormously: and everyone will be almost as happy as if there were no schools at all.

Such, in brief outline, is my proposed policy as Minister of Education. Whether it will prove popular with schoolmasters is perhaps open to some doubt. But there is, I think, no doubt whatever that it will be hailed with acclaim by their pupils.

Other portfolios will be offered to:

- (6) A. P. H.  
Home Secretary
- (7) STIRLING MOSS  
Minister of Transport
- (8) ARNOLD WESKER  
Minister of Housing
- (9) GWYN THOMAS  
Chancellor of the Exchequer
- (10) NIGEL KNEALE  
Minister of Power



## In the Footsteps of D. H. Lawrence

By MALCOLM BRADBURY

HAVE you been to Eastwood yet? You must, you really must. Everyone this year is doing the Lawrence pilgrimage. The B.B.C. Recording Van has been, and then there was the film company making *Sons and Lovers*, which paid all the Eastwood colliers a deprivation allowance because they took down all their television aerials for the location shots. In fact commerce out Nottingham way has never been better, and there are those who hold that nowadays it is the real node of the literary life.

I must warn you, though, if you are thinking of making the trip, that the apogee of Lawrence pilgrimage has already been reached in a by now quite well-worn essay by an Oxford don. I've made several visits to Eastwood but I've never been able to match the moment he describes when, sheltering in a doorway from the town's windy rains, he sees two small boys looking at him and hears one observe

"Who is that handsome, well-dressed stranger?"

Some little time ago a companion and myself did go to Eastwood to tread in the steps of the master. My companion, whose name was Michael Orsler, was an avid admirer of Lawrence. There are two schools of Lawrence admirers; one group thinks that he wrote novels about class and the other that he wrote novels about sex. Orsler, a lad of rural stock, belonged to the sexy school. "Sex rules the world," he used to shout loudly on buses; and old ladies would turn round and, disputing the philosophy, hit him on the head with umbrellas. "Why don't you sublimate, like everyone else?" I often used to ask him when we were at college together. Orsler only grew defiant. "Somehow," he'd say, "I just can't."

One day, therefore, we could have been seen, by any small boys interested in observing two handsome, well-

dressed strangers, getting off the Nottingham bus in the middle of Eastwood. Orsler was all fascination, all gape; I, on the other hand, was in a paroxysm of nervousness in case I should come across any friends who realized what I was doing. We Nottinghamshire people have always preserved a certain insouciance about Lawrence, and I had friends who would have cut me for life if they'd known what I was up to. Moreover I was only too well aware that Eastwood people had little respect for Lawrence (those, that is, who had heard of him), and when there had been some talk of naming a miner's social centre after him it had been quickly squashed; no one wants to play darts in a building named after a chap who wrote dirty books. I knew that Orsler, who did all he did in style, would want to interview the local residents about their memories, and we should be fortunate if we left the place in good order.