

## The European Union and your Child - a concerned parent's guide

One of the hallmarks of civil society is an insistence that citizens, and in particular schoolchildren, should be encouraged to make up their own minds on important social and political issues. While most responsible parents would agree that children should be taught about the rival political or economic theories of our time, virtually all would also agree that controversial issues must be presented in an even handed way - as indeed the law of the land requires. Neither side should be presented as 'right' and the other 'wrong' - nor should only one side of the argument be presented to the exclusion of other points of view.

It is, in fact, the absence of this balance which is a defining characteristic of totalitarian states. Adolf Hitler famously observed that it did not matter if the Nazis faced opposition from adults, because their children would be bound into the system forever. The result was the creation of the Hitler Youth and an all-pervasive indoctrination of children from birth. The Soviet Union and other Communist states adopted practically identical systems.

Today, in Britain, the European Union (EU) is engaged in educational programmes aimed specifically at children which are blatantly in breach both the law and the principles of even-handedness.

In this pamphlet we will cite examples of deliberate distortions and outright lies contained in EU educational literature. More common even than these, we will demonstrate areas where the European Union simply refuses to accept that alternative views exist, while failing to substantiate its own assertions. Finally, we will suggest what concerned parents can do about this situation.

It is not our purpose to debate whether propaganda aimed at children actually works. Fortunately, children are naturally robust in their views (as every parent knows!) and this may provide some level of protection against indoctrination. It is, nevertheless, important that a level playing field in the presentation of ideas is maintained.

Although inevitably there are lapses of judgement on the part of individual teachers and education authorities, Britain has for the most part an enviable record in this area. True, fierce debates take place over the role of, for example, sex education, or issues of 'political correctness', but the fact that such discussions take place at all indicates the rightful sensitivity of parents to the suggestion that their children are not being given both sides of the story.

Lest we ourselves be accused of bias, let us state our own position. The authors of this paper are supporters of the *Campaign for an Independent Britain* - assisted by contributors to the Eurofaq internet discussion group. *Campaign for an Independent Britain* believes that a negotiated British withdrawal from the European Union is both feasible and desirable. We should also state that we have no objection to the European Union seeking to promote its policies and activities. Indeed, we welcome such a debate. But what cannot be tolerated is one-sided misinformation presented as fact, without the fair possibility of correction or challenge. It is at this point that

'information' becomes 'propaganda'. We believe that point has been reached in much of the material now being distributed by the European Union in our children's schools.

### **Why target our children?**

The European Union traces its history to the creation, in 1957, of a Common Market comprising six original members - Germany, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy. Britain joined at the beginning of 1973. The original defining treaty is the Treaty of Rome. Subsequent treaties - most notably the Maastricht Treaty and the recent Amsterdam Treaty - have vastly extended the scope of the European Union's fields of involvement in our national life.

Britain's membership of the European Union has always been highly controversial. Currently, a sizeable minority (44% of voters) favours outright withdrawal from the EU. A majority of Britons are hostile to further moves towards a centralized European state. Equally, upwards of 60% of the UK population is opposed to the next major step towards European integration, Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), which would result in the scrapping of the pound sterling and its replacement with the European single currency, the 'euro'.

Although 'Euroscepticism' is often portrayed as a purely British phenomenon, the fact is that groups opposing the current direction of European integration exist in every EU member nation. A majority of the citizens of Europe are opposed to further moves towards integration.

At one level, it is therefore quite clear why the European Union should seek to alter public opinion in the UK (and elsewhere). The European Union's institutions and policies are deeply unpopular. Naturally, the EU wishes to change that perception. And let us state again that they have every right to do so. What they must not do is present their case as though it is impartial fact, rather than part of a fierce and ongoing political debate.

It should also be noted that the British Government is unfortunately not neutral in this respect. In 1997, the Government launched, without any apparent consultation with parents and teachers, the 'Partner in Europe Package'. This was backed by an EU grant of up to £2,000,000. The cost to the taxpayer was estimated as between £224,000 to £309,000. Amongst its proposals are the solving of mathematical problems in euros and the introduction of French folk dancing into PE classes. The package includes a section for teachers and administrators entitled 'Managing the European Dimension'. This includes the statement that "a European dimension in education is not an explicit part of the inspection framework [but how] European policy and plans contribute [are to be] reported on in inspection." In other words, schools will be judged on their willingness to include the 'European dimension' even though it is not a legal requirement of the national curriculum.

The current government also favours entry into Economic and Monetary Union as 'soon as the time is right.' This is a barely coded euphemism for 'as soon as we can win a referendum.' Since today's 15-16 year olds would probably be old enough to vote in such a referendum, they can be regarded as a valid target for influence.

There is a broader context. The European Union has become increasingly paternalistic in its view of Europe's youth and open in its belief that indoctrination of the young is a permissible activity. In the weird and somewhat sinister language of official European Union documents "it is strategically judicious to act where resistance is weakest... Mother Europe must protect her children."

In 1988, EU Education Ministers called upon member states to "strengthen in young people a sense of European identity; prepare young people to take part in the economic and social aspects of the Community; make them aware of the advantages of the EU; improve knowledge of the Community." These objectives clearly go far beyond merely providing neutral 'information' about the EU. They seek positively promoting the alleged 'advantages' of EU membership and actively inculcate 'a sense of European identity' (as defined by the EU). As such they fall outside the requirement of the Education Act 1996 requiring impartiality in political education.

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### The legal position

The Education Act 1996, Article 406, says that:

"The local education authority, governing body and head teacher shall forbid:  
(a) the pursuit of partisan political activities by those registered pupils at a maintained school who are junior pupils, and  
(b) the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school"

Article 407 states that head teachers must ensure that "where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views."

The legal position is thus quite clear. Not only are school teachers required to refrain from partisan political activities in the classroom, they are under an active obligation to prevent other individuals and groups (including schoolchildren themselves) from engaging in such pursuits. The direct responsibility lies with the governing body and the head teacher.

Governing bodies and head teachers have two alternatives, therefore, if they wish to remain within the law. Either they must prevent the introduction of European Union literature into schools, or, where it is allowed, permit the circulation of reasonable alternative material, provided the latter is non party-political in nature.

It is not a defence to claim, as is sometimes done, that EU material is simply 'information.' By its repeated inclusion of unsubstantiated and controversial assertions, European Union literature quite clearly falls short of such a definition. Indeed, by no stretch of the imagination can Britain's relationship with the European Union - one of the most hotly debated questions of our time - not be considered a 'political issue'.

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## **How the EU targets schools**

Culture, education and the arts are not mentioned in the Treaty of Rome which set up the original Common Market. Nevertheless, this is a field which Brussels has added to its agenda in recent years.

According to the European Union, "forty years of working together has made Europeans increasingly aware of their common culture, the importance of their cultural diversity and the immense riches of their cultural heritage" - in itself a highly contentious observation. This made it "almost inevitable" that the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht), which came into force in November 1993, should contain passages on cultural and educational policy.

The European Commission's main educational initiative is called 'Socrates - The European Union Education Programme', the aim of which is to 'help schools and colleges to enhance the European dimension in the curriculum'. Cultural exchanges and foreign languages are among its core activities. Some aspects of the EU's cultural and educational programme are indeed relatively innocuous, such as its support for the European Union Youth Orchestra and the European Union Baroque Orchestra. Many others are considerably less benign.

*A Guide for Students and Teachers* issued by the European Commission, sets the standard for accuracy and impartiality which we will encounter throughout our analysis of the EU's educational material. The document states that: "As a European Citizen you should enjoy higher living standards, improved opportunities for career development, better health and safety conditions." Leaving aside the careful use here of the word 'should', this is an entirely open ended statement. Do teachers enjoy higher standards of living as a consequence of being a 'European Citizen'? How are these measured? If so do they unequivocally arise from Britain's membership of the EU? These questions are left entirely unanswered.

The 1997 *Classroom Guide to the European Union*, aimed at 11-14 year olds, claimed that "The EU is like a club. Our Ministers decide; the EU does not tell each country what they should produce and how." Compare this quotation with the conclusions of the 1996 House of Commons Select Committee on European Law, which stated that Westminster no longer possessed an effective scrutinizing ability in matters of EU law. The Committee said: "European law accounts for a large and increasing proportion of the law of each member state, yet it increasingly seems to be made in a private club."

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## **Specific EU publications and programmes**

A number of EU projects are aimed primarily or exclusively at schoolchildren, and it is these which mainly concern us here, particularly as in most cases any semblance of political impartiality is discarded. In addition to numerous pamphlets, CDs, and booklets of general application, examples of EU educational programmes include:

*Let's Draw Europe Together*

This is a colouring-in book aimed at primary schoolchildren and produced by the EU's Information Directorate in Brussels. The supporting documentation for teachers describes it as "a call to schoolchildren as well as to all of us to commit ourselves to achieving European unity" - a manifestly political objective.

This book includes colouring games for children but with a heavily 'loaded' text covering such weighty topics as 'Toys and the Single Market' - hardly the stuff of playground conversations! It is also riddled with inaccuracies. It states, for example, that from 2002 "your savings will have to be in euros." In Britain's case this is, quite simply, untrue - it ignores the fact that Britain (and Sweden and Denmark) are not currently joining the euro zone. It almost certainly is not true either that "in five years time, if you are working, you'll be paid in euros". Both these comments seek to present the euro as a good thing and as inevitable. This ignores not only the controversy surrounding the euro in Britain, but also the near certainty that a referendum would have to be held prior to its introduction in this country.

### *The Raspberry Ice Cream War*

Subtitled "A comic for young people on a peaceful Europe without frontiers", this is a glossy 29 page comic book in full colour. It is produced in every official EU language.

The booklet includes such claims as "border controls ... went out ages ago" and "we're even going to have the same currency soon as well. It's called the euro." Neither statement is true in respect of Britain. The peaceloving European Union is contrasted with a Europe living in the dark ages. One figure, Paul, observes: "Frontiers and barriers everywhere and people fighting wars for the stupidest reasons ... Kind of weird." Presumably 'Paul' would regard, for example, the defeat of Nazi tyranny as at worst 'stupid' and at best a 'kind of weird' motive for fighting a war.

The inaccuracy and political bias in *The Raspberry Ice Cream War* may have proved too much even for the London offices of the European Commission. Despite being provided with 75,000 copies from Brussels only a handful have been distributed.

### *What Exactly is Europe?*

Produced by the European Commission, this book is described as "a classroom guide to the European Union". It is aimed at 11-14 year olds and has been distributed to 30,000 schools. Like *Let's Draw Europe Together* it is littered with unsubstantiated assertions presented as fact, without any attempt at qualification. It also seeks to present the view that everything good to have emerged from 'Europe' throughout history is somehow the work of the European Union. There is also an openly party political endorsement of New Labour: "thanks to the new Labour Government the UK will participate in all those actions [ie the single currency and further European integration]."

### *Euroquest*

This booklet is aimed at primary school children. It includes quizzes and question and answer exercises about various aspects of 'Europe' - which the authors clearly see as

synonymous with the European Union. The whole thrust of this book blandly glosses over the fact that the European Union is simply one political institution within Europe (albeit the most most powerful) and that EU policies, far from being neutral and automatically desirable, are highly contentious political issues.

*A common theme throughout these books is an attempt to make the concept of the European Union entirely interchangeable with a positive view of 'Europe' - we shall be returning to this theme later.*

### *Captain Euro*

This is a web-site and a cartoon strip featuring a 'super hero' - Captain Euro - and his assistants. Their opponents are a group of villains led by 'Dr D. Vider' who, for no discernible reason, engage in random acts of terrorism across Europe. The whole effort is unsophisticated - it is essentially a pastiche of American comic book characters such as Spiderman or the Power Rangers. However, as the 'good guys' are transparently agents for the European Union and their opponents are patently 'Eurosceptics' - and terrorists as well! - Captain Euro amounts to political bias of the worst order.

Captain Euro has been widely condemned by anti-racist organizations for its clichéd presentation of the 'super heroes' who are blond and blue-eyed, while their enemies have swarthy Jewish or East European features.

The comic strip was launched at a press conference chaired by a European Civil Servant and endorsed by the President of the European Parliament, who also contributed a 'star interview' to the Captain Euro website. Following public condemnation of the project as propaganda and, potentially, racist, European Union spokesmen have asserted that Captain Euro is merely a commercial franchising opportunity. The creators of Captain Euro are, in fact, an organization called Twelve Star Communications - a name that surely reveals their own political orientation. Twelve Star Communications lists the pro-Brussels European Movement and the European Parliament amongst their clients.

### *The Mobile Information Centre (MIC)*

The MIC is, in the EU's own words, "a high profile exhibition vehicle that carries a broad range of information about the European Union, its policies and programmes to the education sector, business people and the general public, both in the United Kingdom and other European Union states." In fact, it is deployed virtually exclusively in schools.

The EU also asserts that "after six years of operation it has become a prominent feature in ongoing regional campaigns that aim to raise awareness of European Union policy and development." Note that its aim is to promote policy: again this clearly goes beyond merely an information role.

The MIC carries general information on the European Union in varying formats aimed at pupils of all ages. It is staffed by two Information Assistants who can "offer

talks on the European Union, answer general questions and guide students to relevant information both on board the MIC and in their local area."

Following widespread protests by anxious parents the Mobile Information Centre appears to have been withdrawn.

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## **The EU's methods - information or propaganda?**

*"All elephants are pink"*

An important characteristic of European Union literature is its use of subjective assertions presented as impartial facts. Time and again the reader is assured that "the European Union creates jobs;" "the European Union promotes youth activities;" "the single currency will support economic growth." These statements are then used to substantiate further contentions. All European Union literature, without exception, falls well short of the academic rigour which we would demand of, say, a school history textbook.

This failure by the authors of European Union literature to include any meaningful analysis is so consistent that it is difficult to believe that this is not a deliberate policy. Certainly, the authors are extremely reluctant to provide proper, authoritative references. This might either be because no such sources can be found to support their position, or, more probably, because subjective statements are almost inevitably open to alternative interpretations.

This amounts to what is called a 'closed value system'. How this works can be demonstrated by considering the statement: "All elephants are pink. Nellie is an elephant, therefore Nellie is pink." Taken in isolation, this statement is both logical and internally consistent. It collapses, of course, the moment the author is challenged to provide any independent proof that elephants are pink, and, worse, is confronted with evidence that they are, in reality, grey. European Union literature operates in exactly this fashion, and is barely more sophisticated.

*History rewritten?*

One assertion is worth examining in more detail, simply because it occurs with monotonous regularity in EU literature. This is the claim that the European Union has 'kept the peace in Europe.'

This claim is, of course, entirely subjective. There is no way of telling whether the risk of war in Europe would have been greater, or less, had the EU never existed. Furthermore, the EU's claims to European peacekeeping are invariably made without any reference to NATO, to the massive American military commitment to western Europe, or to the 'balance of terror' and the Cold War division of Europe which prevailed until the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989. All of these factors have more genuine historical claim to have contributed to the peace of Europe than the EU, which has no military or defence dimension.

The European Union's purposeful ignorance of NATO and its deliberate - some would say insulting - omission of reference to the US involvement in Europe's defence (or

that another key NATO member, Britain, did not even join the EU until 1973) betrays a lack of any historical objectivity. Indeed, it borders on historical revisionism.

*"Europe is ours!"*

It is also perhaps worth noting that many Europeans in, say, Bosnia or Kosovo, would disagree with the EU's assertion that war has been prevented in Europe. This brings us to a related issue: the tendency of EU literature to deliberately confuse the European Union and its institutions with 'Europe' as a geographical, cultural and historical whole - despite the fact that a majority of Europe's nations are not part of the EU.

In some cases the result is absurd as when, for example, the European Union tries to co-opt long dead Europeans, such as da Vinci and Beethoven (whose views on the EU, were they alive today, can only be guessed at) and seeks to present any positive social, scientific and cultural progress in Europe as being part of an historical process of which the EU itself is a culminating part. Even fictional characters, such as Tintin and the fairytale characters of Hans Christian Andersen have been pressganged for the cause of European integration. (Although this is patently a dishonest technique the EU can perhaps be forgiven for delving into the realms of fiction to establish its authority since actual historical advocates of European unity - such as Hitler, Napoleon, Himmler and Stalin - are uniformly unattractive!)

Any positive cultural or social pan-European endeavour is readily enlisted. In a document aimed at youth some years ago the EU cited the Eurovision Song Contest (*sic*) as a positive example of a pan-European cultural event, conveniently ignoring the fact that many Eurovision members - Israel, for example - are not remotely part of the EU. More recently the EU has sought to suggest that successful football teams are somehow part of a common 'European' effort on the sporting field. Yet neither Eurovision nor UEFA (the governing body of European football) has any institutional connection whatsoever with the European Union.

In its attempts to bathe itself in the reflected glory of European achievements to which it has not contributed, the European Union consistently seeks to imply that it, and it alone, is the repository of the European political and cultural tradition. The reader will struggle to find reference to other pan-European bodies such as the European Free Trade Area, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, or the Council of Europe. Europe, it seems, belongs exclusively to the European Union. Meanwhile, the world outside Europe might as well not exist: EU 'educational' material routinely excludes any substantive mention of world organizations such as the United Nations or the World Trade Organization.

It is not the role of this pamphlet to examine the debate regarding 'multicultural' schooling, and the claims that our education system undervalues the culture and traditions of pupils from Asian, Caribbean, or other backgrounds. Suffice to say here that, if education can be accused of being 'Eurocentric', the literature produced by the European Union is amongst the worst offenders. A newly arrived reader from Mars would be left in no doubt that human habitation of this planet, or at least civilization, ends with the borders of 'Europe'. This is utterly inappropriate in a country such as Britain, where innumerable children have global family ties to America, India, Canada, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere.

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## **What you can do**

Many parents have expressed alarm at the activities of the European Union in schools. Your approach can be made on several levels:

- to your child's class teacher
- to the head teacher
- at PTA meetings
- to your school's Board of Governors
- to the Director of Education for your area.

In all cases it is worth emphasising the legal position as set out in the 1996 Education Act (see above). If the school is insistent about using EU provided materials, you in turn should require that material presenting alternative views on European development should also be available.

Some schools maintain that EU literature is 'just information' and is provided by the Government. Many teachers will simply be unaware of the issues raised. The examples quoted in this document - particularly the instances where the European Union literature itself makes clear its political agenda - refute this suggestion.