

## Appendix 2: My Steiner Experience

### Introduction

There is considerable interest amongst a small number of educators in Waldorf Education. The majority of these people will contact either a private Waldorf School or people connected with a private Waldorf School or institution. They will find one interpretation of Steiner's writings. Steiner people are, of course, entitled to their interpretation of Steiner's writings (just as anyone else is).

My interpretation, however, differs considerably from theirs. The following describes my involvement with the Waldorf approach to education over the last 44+ years. It also describes my experience with the "Waldorf world" during this time. My main objective isn't to praise or criticize but to describe, as accurately as my powers allow those experiences.

There exists an enormous variety in the "Waldorf world". I always hope that newcomers will have good experiences and that, if they are placing their child in a Waldorf program, they will find a good teacher and school. Sometimes this doesn't happen and if their reading of the following prevents heartache, pain and even suicide (please see below) then whatever negativity I receive from Waldorfians because of this being written and posted will be placed in perspective.

Another part of my reason for writing this is to redress the balance that the only interpretation of Steiner's writings is by people in the private Waldorf sector. In my opinion they do not possess a monopoly of wisdom nor a monopoly of knowledge in these matters - occasionally I do meet Waldorf people who share this opinion but unfortunately only very occasionally (2 people in last 10 years!).

I believe that Waldorf methodology has a considerable contribution to make to public education. I also believe that people who come from private Waldorf schools or from anthroposophy have a hidden agenda and for a variety of reasons should not be involved in setting up programs in public schools.

The reasons for my holding this view will be elaborated upon later. I also believe that anthroposophists should make this agenda overt in their dealings with non-anthroposophists (not dogmatically but in an appropriate manner i.e. honestly and with appropriate timing and transparency).

In this perspective it is clear that some or perhaps even many, things that happen in private Waldorf schools are not appropriate for the public sector of education and it follows that "anthroposophists" should not become involved when they have this hidden agenda.

I haven't any doubt that if anthroposophy was examined by any team of "experts" (I leave the reader to create the team) it would be regarded as a religion (The counsel for San Diego City Schools has made it clear that for First Amendment purposes anthroposophy would be viewed as a religion).

Teachers in private Waldorf schools know exactly why they are doing things - their training concentrates almost totally on them. They have every right to hold those views and share them with parents. They do not have a right to take their hidden agenda into the public sector of education and not make it overt (I will elsewhere go into this subject in depth).

I leave it to readers to form their own judgments on the above. Meanwhile for the sake of accuracy my own story may be of interest to those who believe, as I do, that Waldorf has a lot to offer to many, many children in the public sector.

It may also give some indication of things that may or will happen when one would prefer to be a free thinker rather than become a "member" of anthroposophy (whether this means joining the anthroposophical society) or being involved with other anthroposophists in initiatives.

## **Some Background**

### **Late 1960s-early 1970s.**

My first job in education was as an elementary teacher. I had recently left university and although my wish was to find a rural setting in which to start my teaching career quite the opposite happened. The first offer I received was to teach in the dock area of the East End of London!

It was rather a shock to be faced with forty four eight-year-olds. The environment was not conducive to learning; we looked out of the windows and saw block upon block of tall apartments. On the other side of these blocks lay the docks. Teaching these children was not easy. They seemed to have enormous energy and enthusiasm for anything but learning. They were very tough but living and surviving in the East End of London was tough so I wasn't surprised at their resilience or their reluctance for learning.

I decided right from the start that using textbooks was not going to work. It was bad enough trying to maintain discipline without attempting to get them to work from material, textbooks, which held little appeal to them.

I felt, and I still do, that for elementary students a great deal of their learning can and should be enjoyable and that content needs to relate to their mindset. I decided to try something different. I read them a story. The response was encouraging - "*I like that Sir*" and similar comments.

Next day I told them a story and the results were even better. Continual eye contact and, occasionally, for a few precious moments they were all, yes all, listening quietly.

### **The Start.**

Why did I start by doing this? During part of the vacations at university my wife and I had fostered a child from a Rudolf Steiner special school. I was interested in the education he was receiving and researched it. It was called Waldorf education and what I read made sense to me.

I was particularly interested in the idea that the development of the cognitive and affective should occur in balance and harmony with each other. Also, that initially with elementary students, one should appeal to the creative, artistic and imaginative.

It was also clear that Steiner believed the Waldorf approach can be used in many different school settings, whatever his followers might say to the contrary. The following is what Steiner said on this issue  
*"Moreover, I should like to point out to you that the real aim and object of our Anthroposophical education is not to found as many Anthroposophical schools as possible. It is, of course, necessary that there should be certain model schools where the methods are carried out in detail. It is a crying need of our days that there should be such schools. But our education concerns itself with the methods of teaching, and is essentially a new way and art of education, so every teacher can bring it into this work, in whatever kind of school he/she happens to be. There can be no question of creating revolutions in existing institutions. Our task is rather to give indications of a way of teaching arising out of our anthroposophical knowledge of man."*

Rudolf Steiner, *Roots of Education* (p30)

I didn't even at that time want to follow with blind faith. I had recently obtained an honours degree from a good university (Sussex) and had received a very thorough training on how to use my mind. I decided to take from Waldorf what I considered appropriate for the setting I was teaching in, the dock area, and use my own creative ability to prepare material. Isn't this is the essence of what Steiner was talking about?

It bothered me that even at that point that when I met Steiner people they wanted me to be less than honest concerning what I was doing. Why should I even defend or lie about what I was doing? I never have to defend or lie if I'm taking something from Piaget, Read, Joan Tough, Bruner, Maslow, Rogers, Peters, the latest reading program or whoever/whatever.

So I asked myself “*why should I do anything different now?*” I decided I shouldn’t. I did pass what I was doing on to the principal and also one of the advisers. Their replies were to the effect that the main criterion was that if it works it’s ok.

So I prepared lessons and based my teaching on my interpretation of the approach. Things went well. I told stories, wherever possible encouraged students to become involved in drama, and also to use their imagination and creativity. It wasn't Utopia but teaching a large class in the dock area was never going to be easy.

However the conclusion was clear - it worked. One of the advisors visited my class and liked what he saw. From there things slowly evolved - other curriculum coordinators etc. became interested in the approach and I ended up giving some informal presentations.

We had been in London nearly three years and had hardly seen anything but it was time to move on and we applied for teaching posts in other parts of the country. My main degree had been in economics and I decided to apply for positions in high schools. Our hard work (and the excellent references we received) paid off and we both secured good posts.

I was appointed head of an economics department in a high school and Joyce accepted a position as a teacher with some special responsibilities in an elementary school. Both posts were in a city in the industrial north of England.

### **Early 1970s**

Most of my teaching was taken up with teaching “A” level economics. At the other end I had chosen to teach social studies to the bottom streams. And what did I do? You guessed it. I told them stories, encouraged them to draw and paint and also gently directed them to learn and to express what they had learned in a variety of artistic and creative formats. The students produced good work.

I worked hard at all my duties and was approached to sit on a number of education committees. I eventually become chairperson of many of those committees. I accept that my life wasn't my own any more (thanks to my wife for understanding). The time flew by. Some eighteen months later I was asked to appear before the principal. What had I done now?

Isn't it nice to be praised? Not only were some very nice things said about my teaching but also that he was recommending me for a full year’s secondment to take my Masters in Education at the University of Leeds.

He told me quite clearly that I should think, once my Masters is complete, to seek an appointment in teacher training and that the approach I used should be offered as courses. Also, that I should use him and the Vice-Principal as references.

They had no interest in the philosophy; they probably did not even know there was a philosophy behind the pedagogy. However, they knew what they had seen, they knew it worked, and they wanted it for other students out there. Arthur and Ken were great guys. It was only later that I realized how full of integrity they were.

With the benefit of hindsight I can look back and say that it was a privilege to serve under you; and that your encouragement and your integrity still mean a lot to me.

### **Early 1970s-late 1970s**

I completed my Masters taking Philosophy of Education as a major. The semester ended and I adjusted to going back to my teaching when suddenly there was a phone call. A Teacher Training Institution wanted to appoint a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy of Education. They would be advertising through normal channels but would I be prepared to go for an interview at short notice?

It all happened very quickly, other applicants were interviewed but I managed to secure the post. It was the best job in the world as far as I was concerned. I cannot think of a better way to earn a living than teaching students who want to become teachers.

I took some general classes but most of my teaching was in Philosophy of Education. My general classes included teaching classroom management, and also how to deal with difficult or problem students, and so on.

For the first time in my working life I had time to write. I loved the freedom to hold an opinion and, as long as I express it in appropriate terminology, to be able to say what I believe in. I wrote articles and was delighted when the most reputable of journals published some of them (hope you don't mind me adding but in some journals the first UK philosopher of education for five years to do so - some road to travel from a sixteen year old who left school with no qualifications, little confidence and categorized as non-academic). I register for my PhD and my subject was Waldorf Education.

Three months later the Principal Lecturer in charge of the postgraduate courses wanted to see me. Would I like to become a postgraduate tutor? Would I? Of course I would but what about all the other students I was teaching.

They appointed someone else for the next academic year and I was made Head of Department of two! I derived such pleasure from the job that I did not mind teaching and seeing students at times way beyond my normal office hours.

Sometime later I visited my old school and see the Principal amongst others. After initial pleasantries he asked whether I have done anything about the approach. I explain that I've been very busy and I've got new responsibilities. *"So glad to hear it David but don't forget you have something to offer that others don't."* Arthur when you speak I listen so yes I'll do something about it.

So here I go again. I see the Principal Lecturer in charge of the postgraduate courses (if you're reading this Tony, I'm still trying to contact you again after all these years). His answer is supportive. Sure David why not? Let's give it a go? The process is not simple. It will probably involve a great deal of committee work and takes, usually, something between 18/24 months from start to finish. *"So what happens next,"* I asked.

*"We'll submit your courses so they are in the system and, hopefully, they will in due course receive proper accreditation. You are going to have a fair amount of work with submissions, committee work etc."* I replied that that's no problem; accredited Waldorf courses established in higher education. That's worth working.

Meanwhile am I able to take on extra work? He mentions that he has a course called *"Alternatives in Education"* that isn't being used and that he was thinking of making available next term for post-grads. I could use it to teach a class on the Waldorf approach.

But I am to make sure that if it is not only going to be about the Waldorf approach and the students should know that before they sign up. I did include other "alternative" approaches but in the end the students (not me I can assure you - I had done all the work for the whole course) wanted to learn and learn about Waldorf so that's what I did (submitted and passed through proper channels).

Eventually the courses were accredited for under and postgraduate degrees. I even managed for some students to do part of their teaching practice at the Bristol Waldorf School, Michael House in Derbyshire and Botton Village School in Yorkshire.

I arrange to visit Emerson (Emerson is the main "Steiner" teacher training institution in the UK - it was very small at that time and courses received no accreditation from any outside body).

I was shown around and from the remarks I hear I begin to feel uncomfortable. This isn't about teaching people how to teach; it is about something else. I say very little and return to the north of England somewhat disillusioned and feeling a little disturbed.

I can't quite pin it down so I put it aside for the present. I have much to do - preparing and teaching courses, supervising teaching practice, writing articles, and trying to find time for researching and writing my PhD.

By that time my wife had obtained her Masters and after two years as a Lecturer of Education was invited to establish a Reading and Language Centre in Bradford. It was only the third to be established in the UK and she was appointed Director. We both led busy and fulfilled lives. Our lives are complete when we adopt two little ones from Bangladesh - we are now a family (it includes what I believe can be considered a miracle and is a story in itself).

Meanwhile back in higher education other things were happening, mainly huge cuts and we were being squeezed. More and more I spent my time attending committee meetings to discuss cutting courses. Eventually it was clear that to survive we were going to have to amalgamate with another college (and later the merged college became the School of Education of a Polytechnic, which in itself at a later time became a university - sometimes I feel if you had planned chaos you couldn't have done a better job!).

After four years of cuts I could see nothing ahead except being frustrated and I decided that it was probably best that I worked out some sort of business plan for the future.

No other Waldorf School in the UK showed any interest in myself or anyone else for that matter in taking the approach into the public sector and the Bristol Waldorf School, and Michael House had more than enough doing what they were doing.

I visited Emerson twice more and this time made sure that I also talked to students. My instinct was right. The only educator they were studying was Steiner; indeed part of the ethos amongst the majority that I talked to was that no other educator was worth studying.

I was stunned. I am saying the following in the kindest way I can but from the world I was living in what was happening there could only be considered as indoctrination or as Americans would say brainwashing. I tried to have some influence but heck they didn't want to listen. They wanted to become the centre of Steiner education in the UK.

I made one last effort. I give a presentation to the Steiner Schools Fellowship. They certainly know how to make a visitor feel small. Many of the remarks made to me were to say the least insensitive (some I would now regard as insulting).

Don't tell me that this is Steiner's vision of love in action. I come away knowing that my interpretation of Steiner's writings is, as far as the practical application is concerned, at considerable variance with theirs and there is no point in me remaining in the UK.

I did not post the following three paragraphs for over three years but on 21 November 1999 it was added. However, the tragedy did occur and from some of the postings I have received (from what I'll refer to as hard-line anthroposophists) it is clear that many of the attitudes I abhor are still very much part of that world. I post because if someone does read this and it saves them or their family from severe trauma or worse, then the posting will have been justified.

We had friends in a "Steiner" community (I'm not saying what type of community nor where it was). One of our friends was under severe stress and eventually broke down. We tried to see her and failed. We picked up news of her from some other people we knew.

A couple of Steiner people apparently had decided they knew best how to deal with the situation which included “shielding” her from seeing any of her friends including us.

We lived in a country cottage on the edge of the country. We believe if she had stayed with us we could have given her breathing space and this would have included giving her time to relax, and to walk and read. She certainly would have had our support and love and she could have taken her time to reflect on the many things that were quite understandably deeply troubling her. We would have also seen that she met, if she had wanted it, professional counsellors.

We could not find her. She had been taken somewhere. We never did find out where nor did we ever see her again. All we had, some months later, was news of her suicide. Yes, we cried to lose a friend and I'm still so angry at those people - they always know best - if I had to sum up their attitude with one word it would be arrogance.

We still, 20 years later, mourn you and your loss to this world - you had a great deal to share and pass on to others (back to the main thread). So it is time to start a new life somewhere else. Eventually I received my PhD but the subject proved controversial and so I had to be extra careful.

After 10 supervisors, 3 universities, nearly 7-10 years of work and a gruelling but fair viva I received it and no one can take that away from me. So it is time to leave our homeland and in many ways I don't really want to go but California here we come.

### **Early 1980s**

What a first experience, arriving at LAX on a Friday afternoon is not something I would recommend. But we are here and we make our way down to San Diego. On my visit last year I had met the Director of Teacher Training at San Diego State University and he had been helpful, no guarantee of work but life is full of risks!

We find a house to rent near the university, the cost of housing is crippling though. I visit the university and submit outlines for some courses. Sometime later I am glad to hear they are accepted and I begin to teach. The courses went very well and I am heartened and encouraged by the support of students.

I need to say something about the content and outline of courses. I have no doubt that in each one of us there is a creative impulse. In children the impulse, if allowed to, expresses itself naturally and spontaneously. I see no point in being dishonest or devious. Although many educators have influenced me the courses are based on my own interpretation of the Waldorf approach. They should therefore be called Waldorf and they are.

The next week I am approached by a member of faculty. She has had some feedback from some students and would like to know more about the approach. The interest grows. In the next few months I give presentations to the faculty and to every group of elementary student teachers. The demand is overwhelming and I end up with over two hundred student or serving teachers wanting to take courses.

Meanwhile my wife offers her services to the local Waldorf School. They were established some years previously but they have now only reached the point where they are ready to start 1st grade. Here is a person at the top of her profession, with specialist qualifications and experience in reading and language development.

She has taught, with great success, classes in difficult situations including the dock area of the East End of London; she has worked with minorities in the industrial north of England. Her experience and expertise is extensive, varied and impressive. She is probably the best teacher I have ever seen yet the school does not even interview her.

Ah they have someone coming out from England. Of course the person does not even possess a teaching credential but what the heck she is part of the inner circle because she knows all about Waldorf. She may not be able to teach (she didn't - she barely lasted six months) but it really doesn't matter - does it? Anthroposophy in action! To heck with the best thing for the kids, that isn't even a consideration.

But let me continue by describing my own teaching at San Diego State University. The Director is extremely supportive as are many of the faculty and I am extremely grateful. The courses are established the only problem is finance. Due to Proposition 13 (passed I believe in 1979) the State of California is very quickly running out of funds (if only I had come two years earlier the budget surplus was \$7 billion dollars and I would have had little difficulty in getting the funding for the courses). Today the opposite is true. There are very few funds available for any new courses never mind ones that are considered "innovative."

I decide to write to three of the four leading educational figures in Waldorf education in the USA. Surely they will give support, contacts etc. I wait nearly three months but no replies to my letters. I write again and wait, but still no reply. One of the people is head of the Rudolf Steiner College in Sacramento. I phone him a number of times but he is not available. I leave messages but they are not returned. I have over two hundred student or serving teachers wanting to study the Waldorf approach and there is nothing I can do.

I go and explain the situation to the Director of Teacher Training at SDSU. He is sympathetic and says he will do what he can. From somewhere he finds finances for another two courses. I initiate the following. With support of the College of Education I establish the Waldorf Education Program (non-profit) and write to about 300 Foundations seeking funds.

I teach some courses without payment. I travel to Sacramento to see the head of the Rudolf Steiner College. He is unavailable. I see other people. They all say they can do nothing, that I should see the head.

After waiting for three days he sees me. He diverts my remarks. No, he does not want to talk about what is happening in San Diego. In fact he doesn't want to talk about anything other than Rudolf Steiner College. I try another approach but it is clear he has no interest. After about 15 minutes he brings the conversation to a close. So that is that. Before I leave I visit a class.

The same sort of thing is happening to students as was happening at Emerson. It is indoctrination and I know it is. I return to San Diego with the same kind of feeling when I returned to the north of England from Emerson College. These people are not interested in encouraging students to think for themselves or to use their own creative talents. Above all they want the students to join the inner circle. I found it just as unhealthy and unwholesome then as I do now.

My wife is naturally upset. In the next year I carry on the work. This time I do not have the heart to give gratis presentations to every group. With what resources I have I give some and end up with over 100 student or serving teachers wanting to take courses. The university has even less money than before and I am only able to get a few units of teaching. I submit courses to other universities and manage to teach some courses at some other universities in southern California. But we are struggling.

It goes on like this for nearly another two years. We end up in a small apartment in a poor area of San Diego County with no health care and two children starting school. I try for the last time and drive up to Sacramento. Same experience as before except this time the conversation didn't last ten minutes.

No, and really it was no surprise. I didn't get any funds from any foundation. Our children are unhappy at school. Our daughter at the age of seven is getting headaches and tummy aches and doesn't want to go to school. The reasons are very clear. The approach is clinical and mechanical. All she gets is ditto upon ditto sheet to learn and fill in. Both my wife and I are of one accord. We decide to leave California but where do we go? Although we return to the UK for a breathing space we both know we will never again find the posts we had before.

## **Mid-1980s**

We look around and after some research pick New Zealand. After our experiences with our daughter in California we decide they should go to a Waldorf school, I write to some schools in New Zealand. One is full but another has vacancies, we register our children and move to New Zealand. I'm tired of moving but what alternative is there? For me it was the biggest mistake of our lives although some very positive things came out of it.

We take our children to school and are made welcome. There are many, many problems at the school. I do not want to become involved, I must find some work and I find many New Zealanders, certainly those in tertiary education and in this part of New Zealand, closed and prejudiced in attitude.

The very fact of coming from abroad seems to be a disadvantage. However Sarah and Matthew settle in well although we find that both teachers of our children do not possess any qualifications, education or otherwise. We gradually become members of the school community and are made welcome by many parents.

I give some presentations at the school and they are well received. The school lacks an administrator and I am approached about the position. I decline. In the next two months I am approached another three times by different people or groups.

After talking the matter through with my wife I take the matter a stage further, I say that I would like to meet with the College of Teachers. The people I am in touch with say they will arrange it. It never happened and the school year is coming to a close.

They approach me again and eventually I accept the appointment. It was the worst decision I ever made.

Meanwhile I met with the chief inspector for South Island, at that time Nolene McDonald. I gave a presentation concerning some of my work with the Waldorf approach and public educators. The presentation received a positive response and sometime later she was good enough to arrange for me to give a similar presentation to administrators at the Ministry of Education in Wellington.

This presentation was also received positively and I was also fortunate enough to have a brief meeting with the then Minister of Education, Russell Marshall. I was also fortunate to meet with Russell Marshall in Christchurch later and again emphasized that the approach should be made available to all parents and students. I say this in part as probably no one realizes that these meetings may well have played a significant, perhaps even crucial, part in the integration of the Steiner schools into the public sector.

Certainly, I do believe it resulted in administrators being sympathetic to the Waldorf approach. I start at the school and find the worst standards of administration, teaching and ethics that I have ever experienced. I am not a novice. I have lived and worked in the dock area of the East End of London and the industrial north of England. I have seen and experienced schools in poor areas of San Diego and Los Angeles but nothing to compare with what I find at this school.

The teacher of my daughter keeps discipline by pinching the children, she rules by fear. I won't even try to describe the ethical base of teachers except to say it would make Peyton Place look like a picnic! The school has some teaching vacancies for the next year. My wife is one of the best teachers I have ever seen and I've seen quite a few. I'm prejudiced but she probably is the best, compassionate, caring and so thorough in everything she does. I persuade her to take one of the vacancies. Some ten years later she is starting to forgive me!

As an aside it would be a good research project for someone to find out the turnover of staff in Waldorf schools. The ideal of one teacher carrying a class through I regard as something of a joke, my daughter had 4 teachers in one year!

One bad experience is followed by another. I am not allowed to sit on the College of Teachers, how can an administrator administer if he cannot even sit on committees? They keep me waiting outside meeting after meeting. I slowly find out that a faction did not want me appointed.

All you guys had to do was to come to me direct and say you didn't want me and you wouldn't have had me with a mile of the place. I've had enough bad experiences already of the Steiner/Waldorf world. So you guys make my life impossible and school hasn't even started yet! When I come home in the evening completely exhausted my wife doesn't believe the way I have been treated.

School starts and she sees firsthand what is happening to me. At lunchtime on the first day she comes to me and says there is no point in us staying. We tender our resignations. The parents are up in arms. I am grateful for their support but neither my wife nor I want to work there and will work out our notice. The parents organize, hold meetings and tell us that things will immediately change; knowing some of the people involved I very much doubt it.

It really is against my better judgment but I have been persuaded by the "Parents Committee" to continue as administrator. I ask for the support to be formalized and I receive in writing their thoughts. It isn't quite what I was after but it certainly indicates their support.

I also receive support from some members of the College of Teachers. I even manage to sit in on one meeting (they still played games with me and kept me waiting at the door for nearly half an hour - this is anthroposophy in action!).

However it is clear that nothing has really changed as far as my working conditions are concerned. One day I am sitting in my office (it is temporary accommodation and one can hear outside conversations). I hear two people talking outside. They are two of the people who oppose me.

They are talking about how they can get rid of me, not only out of the school but also how they can get us deported from New Zealand. I keep the news away from my wife. I do however contact Immigration. We came as visitors to New Zealand. It was a huge risk but I believed I could find work and we could settle and build a life for ourselves. I did not want to rely on any other person or agency as a means to obtaining permanent residency and filed papers accordingly.

Once however I had taken the job at the Waldorf School I apparently came into another category. This news was obviously worrying. Anyway things came to a head very quickly and both Joyce and myself left the school soon after. I am quite willing to describe in detail the events if these are required.

I then went straight to the Immigration authorities. What I had heard in that conversation was true. The group of 3 (perhaps 4) had filed a report stating that I had only taken the job at the School in order to gain permanency residency. Now I had left the job and had no visible means of support we had no grounds for permanency residency. Indeed I was viewed as an undesirable visitor.

It was obviously all very worrying and I had no option but to share most of what I had found out with Joyce. Meanwhile we had withdrawn our two children from the school. This was no big deal. My son's teacher had no qualifications and was, as far as we were concerned, incompetent (she didn't know what a reading scheme was and had become hostile when we raised the matter); our daughter had had four teachers in one year. We settled them in the local elementary school.

I approached one parent who had supported me throughout. He was a businessman, extremely busy, but helpful. I explained the situation to him. He was appalled and gladly offered assistance. He was willing to employ me and also write to Immigration on my behalf. I approached Immigration again and arranged a formal interview. I put together references and letters of support for my work covering the last twenty years.

The Immigration Officer, a lady, was, initially, certainly unsympathetic to my/our plight. I patiently talked through what had happened to me, conveyed to her that I was now employed etc. By the end of the hour's interview she said she would be willing to review my case.

I departed leaving my CV with her. I was called for another interview about a month later. The good lady (and I thank God we had someone dealing with us who had integrity and a sense of justice/fair play) had reviewed our case, believed we had been badly treated (some understatement from where I was sitting!), and would recommend that we should be allowed to stay.

However there were complications. The application had gone to Wellington some months previously and I was still being treated as an undesirable. The lady (God bless her) was however now firmly on our side. She would do her best to arrange an interview with the Head of Immigration in Wellington. Yes it would have to go to that level because of all the complications. Soon after I heard I had been granted an interview. I flew to Wellington and met the Head of Immigration.

He treated our case with sympathy, said he had reviewed all our material, and hoped to welcome us to New Zealand. However there were complications. It was obviously the case that certain people did not want me/us in New Zealand and were prepared to go to some lengths to achieve their objectives. The employment I had been offered was therefore important and the letter of support I had received from the businessman had been crucial in meeting immigration requirements.

He set out what else he needed to make sure there was not the slightest complication which could jeopardize our application. He would also handle the matter or supervise the handling of our application personally until it was completed (yes there are some kind people in this world!).

Back home Joyce was overjoyed. We had had over a year of extreme worry. Our children were happy in school and we believe they deserved a settled period in their lives. I quickly put together the documents that the Immigration authorities needed. A few months later we had heard that we had gained permanency residency. The Steiner people could no longer harm us in that regard.

Meanwhile there had been other developments. I had been approached by some parents who had been very sorry to see the way we had been treated but also wanted to see if it was possible to build something else. After that we met regularly and soon after we were able to register the Association for Waldorf Education (AWE) as a non-profit incorporated organization (I still have copies of the constitution). We met regularly and established various committees.

I approached the local College of Education to see if it was possible to give a few lectures (gratis). I was met with certainly a neutral attitude bordering on the negative. I pushed ahead and was informed to submit course outlines. This I did but I never heard anything about them.

I did however make some contacts in the college and found out eventually some things that had happened. Apparently several rumours had been circulated about me. That my qualifications were fraudulent and that I had been "kicked out" of the USA.

There was obviously a huge question mark against me. I approached the university and found similar attitudes. For all intents and purposes my professional career had been destroyed. I don't even try any more. But I never gave one lecture all the time I lived in New Zealand (some ten years) so the Steiner people certainly achieved their objectives in that regard.

We now had to make a living. Whether it was the right decision or not I do not know but I persuaded Joyce to write and produce videos on the Waldorf approach with accompanying booklets. I set about researching the skills we would need to learn, the equipment we would need to purchase etc.

Our children were happy and settled and so was Joyce. It was a case of buckling down and deciding how to make a living. We did produce five videos and booklets. We circulated all the Steiner schools in the English speaking world but only sold very few so we would have to rethink what we were doing (the Steiner people in New Zealand went to the trouble of writing a circular describing why people interested in Waldorf education should not view videos etc. I still have a copy somewhere!).

I guess I was slowly coming to the conclusion that my interpretation of what Steiner indicated should happen wasn't happening in the Steiner/Waldorf world. After some thought I put together a data base of every curriculum coordinator in the USA and most schools in the USA as well. It was very time consuming and expensive to do this but the plan was to send the flier on our videos to each curriculum coordinator first and then, depending on the response, start sending to schools.

I held the opinion then, as I do now, that ideas shape most of the things we do. It does however take time for people to change ideas especially if they are being asked to accept new ideas which might well, in the majority of cases, challenge their existing ones. Hopefully there would be a substantial minority who would be interested in what we had to offer. Unfortunately this did not turn out to be the case and we found that literally no one was interested in what we had to offer.

I was to find out, in the next few years, something of how most markets operate in the USA. With present day hindsight I can say my original expectations were, in some ways, unrealistic. This is not to say we shouldn't have done a mail drop. I haven't any doubt we should have.

With hindsight I would have done it differently, our fliers (and videos) would have been different and so on. However, whatever else happened, I now possessed substantial data bases of curriculum people and schools in the USA.

Back in New Zealand it was obvious I would never get any lecturing locally. I wrote to San Diego State University Extensions and had a positive response. I submitted courses and these were accepted. I had kept contacts with people in California and travelled there once a year. At least I was able to lecture once again. The classes were small so the pay was poor but at least I had a foot in the door.

I submitted outlines of presentations to many international education organizations or associations which were based in the USA and I'm glad to say most were accepted. In the next few years I gave presentations on the Waldorf approach at some of the most prestigious conventions including the Association for Curriculum Development and Supervision, the National Association of Elementary School Teachers, the National Middle Schools Association and many others. The presentations were very well received and many participants wanted further information.

On one of these visits I again contacted San Diego School District. I had done this, informally, a couple of times since 1985 but on each occasion, for one reason or another, the timing for a presentation to the School Board was not right. On this occasion I was told yes there might well be a positive response to such a presentation. Fortunately I did have some examples of student's work with me. I met with several members of the Board and staff and gave a presentation which was well received.

Back home I had time to reflect on my experiences. Obviously one doesn't undergo the types of experience we had undergone without effects. I was greatly disappointed and in some ways I felt devastated; more than anything else I felt isolated. I had never come across deceit and deviousness as I had experienced in that one school nor had I ever experienced what I consider uncalled attacks on myself and family.

I have worked in tertiary education in the UK and USA. I also sat on a number of education committees in the old West Riding of Yorkshire. Neither scenario was a picnic. Part of the process is the cut and thrust of opposing opinions at all kinds of levels. That is how it should be - what is the best way to educate children?

What is the best way to teach them to read or whatever? I enjoyed both scenarios in many ways.

However whatever opposition occurred, it was accepted that there should exist certain levels of behaviour and integrity. My expectation of finding even low levels of anything that went beyond self-interest was unrealistic as far as the “Steiner world” was concerned.

### **Early 1990s**

My wife and I started writing material based on the Waldorf approach. For a variety of reasons, we decided to write about some of the Ancient Civilizations. I showed it to some teachers in California and they wanted to purchase it. We wrote and produced more material.

One day we received a telephone call from a lady from the State Department of Education in Sacramento. Some schools wanted to purchase our material and wanted to use state funds to do this. Great I thought, so what's the problem.

I learned there are two stages to the process. Before state funds can be spent material must either have obtained legal compliance or received official adoption. I received information about both processes and we submitted our material for legal compliance.

We received this in due course without any citations or suggestions for alterations etc. We learned later that in many cases material does not receive compliance in this way and that we should have realized the significance of this. We continued to write and started selling our material in New Zealand, Australia and the USA.

In 1994 within the space of a few weeks I received phone calls or letters from three friends or former colleagues in San Diego. Apparently San Diego School District was in the process of establishing a public Waldorf Charter School. I was given the name and address of a contact person and wrote immediately. I had already been told that they had appointed a Director so I made it clear that I was not after any position in the school. If I had been contacted earlier I probably would have been interested in the post.

### **Mid 1990s**

Obviously part of my life's ambition is to see a good Waldorf or Waldorf-inspired program established in the public sector in the English speaking world. A considerable number of people in education in San Diego knew, and I believe, respected the views I held. I also had a lists of former students (teachers) who had given me their names should a school or program be started. It was probable that some of these teachers might well want to teach in the new program.

Personally I do not think it is unreasonable to believe that I would be involved in the program in one way or another, in particular with the training of teachers. I received no answer to my letter. After a couple of phone calls later to my friends in San Diego I realized my worst fears were unfolding. That “Steiner” people were becoming more and more involved, and were taking over the project.

I decide to go to San Diego to see, at first hand, what is happening. The school has been given a site in an area I know very well. It is near San Diego State University and about half a mile from where we originally lived when we first settled in San Diego.

A director has been appointed and initially I was made welcome. He asked me what I wanted from the situation. I make it clear to him that I do not want employment and I try to share with him the importance of seeing that what is only the second public Waldorf initiative in the USA must be a model that everyone can be proud of.

I believe I had a great deal to offer. I know many people in education in the San Diego area. These include people at SDSU, San Diego City and County School Districts. I certainly want to establish properly

accredited Waldorf courses in teacher training at university level. I also want to help the school in any way I can.

Within a couple of weeks it was clear that the school was being run by a small group of anthroposophists or people associated with anthroposophy. It was also clear that the Director did not want me around even though I had made it clear that I was not after a paid position but only wanted to help the school. Soon after I received a letter from him stating that he needed the space where I had a desk. For all practical considerations I was excluded from the school.

I returned to writing material with my wife. We visited many of the top administrators in the State Department of Education in Sacramento and were well received. It was obvious that there was a good future for our material. However we would have to “customize” it so that it met local and state performance standards.

We relocated in San Diego a few hundred yards from Tubman. I gave a week’s teacher training at Harriet Tubman. It wasn’t easy. The group included teachers and ancillary staff. Some had no educational qualifications of any sort; some were teachers who had considerable experience of Waldorf education; some were teachers of considerable experience but knew nothing of Waldorf, and so on.

I had already laid out the foundation for the course. I was clear that educationally it is necessary to lay out the theory in some depth before moving on to practice. I also knew however that majority of Waldorf teachers possessed no teaching credential.

Therefore, they had no experience of what is required to gain a state teaching credential. They certainly had no knowledge of the process of gaining accreditation for courses in teacher training. Yet these were the people who would be judging my work. I needed to make sure the course outlines were acceptable. I contacted the Director and he assured me they were.

The week went well except for two Steiner people. They held no educational qualifications of any sort never mind a California teaching credential. I believe they had no previous experience of teaching. They certainly were the two rudest students I have ever taught in over 30 years in education. One concluded the week by making a totally uncalled for public attack on me. This was at a meeting of the “inner circle” composed of the six anthroposophists who, for all intents and purposes, run the school.

Indeed the principal and the other anthroposophists just sat there while the student carried out a character assassination on me indicating that she would do all in her power to destroy my professional reputation in San Diego. I was astounded that people holding responsible positions could behave in what I consider to be a reprehensible and unprofessional manner. I left the school sad and disappointed and have not yet recovered from the attack.

We were now settled in San Diego. I made an appointment with people in San Diego School District. We quickly learned because of what had happened at Tubman there was no point in even using the name Waldorf. Since I had been using the name Waldorf in San Diego since 1981 and in the UK since 1967 it was very disappointing.

### **August 2000**

I have no doubt that in the fullness of time the following should be recorded. If the truth were known it has taken me some 4 years to recover from what happened to me at Tubman (after nearly 30 years it was the straw that broke the camel's back!).

I decided to put proposals forward to four people all of whom hold positions of power at different Waldorf or anthroposophical institutions; Rudolf Steiner College, Harriett Tubman Charter School, Steiner Fellowship UK, and a New Zealand Public Waldorf School.

I had written a number of times in the 1990s to Rudolf Steiner College without receiving a reply. This time I kept accurate records. I sent an email on 7th April and followed this up with reminders by email on the 11th April and 11th May. I phoned and left messages on the 9th and 14th June and July 6th, 12th and 17th. I received one reply on June 15th and replied in some detail.

I offered my services to their summer institute in any way they saw fit and at no cost. I offered to give one lecture or no lectures. I offered to try and fit in with their timetable including no official contact but being available to teachers on an informal basis. I suggested numerous other alternatives. I never received any response.

I can recount similar stories to my contacts with Harriett Tubman Charter School, Steiner Fellowship UK, and a New Zealand Public Waldorf School and when I have the time I will do so. I do not believe in the conspiracy theory but if I did my “non-contacts” with the above institutions would be a perfect example of such theory at work.

My interpretation is somewhat simpler. People at these institutions have reached positions of power they would never reach in normal circumstances in public education. Being of that ilk they want to hold on to that power or be in control of whatever is happening. As you can see from the above they do not want any contact with someone who has achieved things independently nor do they wish to liaise with that person or assist that person in any way with the spread of Waldorf ideas; nor do they want to make use of that person's expertise or experience. There would appear to be no vision of the “greater good” or that I might have a contribution to make.

### **Funding for Newsletters**

As some of you know Joyce and myself wrote some lessons based on the Waldorf approach but which also met state and national standards. They were included in a Waldorf newsletter that we ran for over a year providing free lessons and information. They were successful in as much over 2,100 teachers, educators and parents subscribed. It became full-time work for both of us and eventually it became clear that without financial support we could not continue. The last newsletter was in December 1999.

I spent most of 2000 trying to get funding but was unsuccessful. My long-term aim is to write lessons for all subjects up to and including grade 6. They would be based on the Waldorf approach but would meet appropriate state and national standards in the USA and UK (also perhaps Australia and New Zealand).

I am now looking for both short and long term funding for the project. This is a labour love as both of us are willing to work for about a quarter of what we would get if we lecturing at university (we were both university lecturers in the UK).

I believe that providing such newsletters could be one important way in which information on the Waldorf approach can be made available on a worldwide basis. I requested that if you know of any possible sources of funding to contact me.

### **2001**

It may be synchronicity but much as happened this year. Joyce returned to Wales last year and has settled there. My plan was to spend some time each year in both Wales and California. I went over and had very supportive meetings with representatives from the Steiner Schools Fellowship and Emerson.

I also met other people involved in different initiatives. One that holds a great deal of promise is some forty miles from where Joyce has settled. I was invited to a university to meet people informally. The night before the meeting we received the telephone call that every parent dreads.

Our son Matthew had suffered severe head injuries in an accident in New Zealand where he was in his last year at university. He was on life support for ten days and survived that. Joyce and I spent four months in New Zealand before we arranged for him to go back to the UK (it was salutary to realise that if this had happened in one of the richest countries in this world of ours, namely the USA, it would have bankrupt us!).

### **2002/2003**

He was very difficult and unpredictable to begin with but we finally got him into a specialised unit in a hospital in London and he spent nearly a year there before living with other students in Swansea. Other plans and initiatives were put on hold but every day brought positive progress and with it our fears and worry lessened. He has now taken control of his life again and has returned to New Zealand in late 2003.

### **2004**

I returned to work in education and created the Teachers' Education Institute (<http://members.cox.net/tei>). Joyce has decided she wants to live permanently in Wales independently. I have waited five years so to sort this out so I have decided to move on with my life. I have begun to work on the material we have written and recreate it in the form of e-lessons. During most of 2004 and 2005 I sought funds for expanding the research mainly on two fronts.

The first concerns researching the most efficient structures of education and making this research available to administrators and other interested parties. For example, in New Zealand about 90% of pre-tertiary education spending is spent directly in the classroom and related activities; the figure for the USA is 54%.

The second is to expand the number of free e-lessons available on the internet. As many of you know there are about 400 such e-lessons available at present and if funding was available the work could be expanded. Unfortunately, I have not been successful in seeking funding.

### **2005**

I am now working independently and I am happy to do so. In late February I was contacted by the Ocean Charter School (OCS) in Los Angeles. I will be working with the school for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, seven courses have been accredited by San Diego State University for both online and direct teaching. As you know my sole purpose is to optimize childrens' learning and wellbeing and I never ignore an opportunity to further those aims. I shall never have anywhere near enough time to complete the work I want to during this lifetime so I am also seeking funding to expand the work.

**Fall 2005** I made a number of submissions to OCS but not receive a response. However, I believe that the teacher training programme at the Northridge School regards me as some sort of threat. As you can see from my above comments, they have been unpleasant to say the least on previous occasions so I will move on.

### **2006**

The highlight for 2006 was that I became godfather to two Cambodian children. For some years now I have mentored six Cambodian children and found that one family was Presbyterian. My offer to take Marisa (age 10) and Jonathan (age 4) to church was gratefully supported and the situation evolved and I became their godfather. Not having children, I never expected to be able to read stories from the Bible to children but I am delighted to say that I am now involved in that as well as other similar activities.

I accept the responsibility of godfather as a very serious responsibility and they attend church with me weekly and I am also involved with their education. It gives me no satisfaction to say that for our own two children we choose four anthroposophists. Not one of those people as shown throughout their lives the slightest interest in being involved with Sarah or Matthew and I regret that Joyce and I picked such people.

### **2007**

In March/April I visited Ukraine. I met a man, lady and her eight-year-old daughter (I'll call her Zara) who were very kind to me and returned in September with no thought of establishing or being involved in any

education initiative. However, as from my viewpoint the education that Zara receives is harming her so I did some research and found a Waldorf School in Kiev.

I emailed them four times without receiving any response. I had an amazing two weeks. Without going into detail, I became heavily involved in teaching students at various universities and also visited a school and taught, much to my surprise, classes of 6, 8 and 10 year-olds.

Afterwards, the Principal invited me into her study. She could not speak any English and I do not speak any Ukrainian or Russian but one of the teachers spoke some English. The Principal was very interested in my programme. On my return I have contacted her and an important businessman I met in Kiev and I am now awaiting their response to my proposals but if it is positive, I shall be working in education in Ukraine but I have no idea what I will be involved in.

However, because of this, I decided that as a matter of courtesy I should make myself known the school. A friend took me there on my last full day in Kiev. We had considerable difficulties locating the school but eventually found it and the Principal was good enough to see me and my friend at very short notice. She did not speak any English so our conversation occurred through the interpretation of my friend. I learned that Waldorf Schools have a choice whether to be state funded or be private.

## **2008**

in January, I received an email from someone at the NewScience Alliance accusing me of doing “a great disservice” to my work by describing my experiences. I responded requesting that he phoned me so we could discuss issues. It did not surprise me that I did not receive any further communication from him. However, I believe that the time and place is right for me to say the following.

My first connection with Steiner’s work was when my wife and I fostered a young boy during vacations from a Steiner Special School in East Sussex in the mid-60s. In one way or another I have been involved with his writings, particularly those describing his approach to education for some forty-four years.

In the above writings I have tried to be fair and accurate. Obviously, in many instances I wish things had turned out differently but people say and do things and I have no control over this. There is no alternative that each of us must be responsible for our statements and actions and if we are representing an organization (anthroposophy or whatever) then if we say or do things relating to that organisation, it is also a reflection of our involvement with that organisation.

I found in Camphill and at the Bristol and Michael House Schools, a mindset that reflects the love that each of us possesses for others. I haven’t any doubt the world would be a different place if the people representing Steiner Schools possessed a similar mindset but with few exceptions what I have seen continually over a period of forty-one years are actions based on satisfying their own mindset rather than that of beneficence.

What I do know is this. Our most precious resource is our children and my commitment has always been to them. I introduced the first Waldorf university courses, accredited for both under and post-graduate work, in state universities in the UK and USA. I have published articles about Waldorf in learned journals and given presentations at some of the most prestigious education conferences; state, national and international.

Occasionally, I have even met Prime and Education Ministers and shared with them what I consider are the best education policies for optimising students’ wellbeing and learning. If there had been any support for my work much, much more could have been achieved but there wasn’t so many things that could have happened didn’t and I accept that.

As the wise man said, “*In the final analysis, it is between you and God; It was never between you and them anyway.*” In that perspective, my main priority is what happens in the classroom; it is not an adherence to an

ideology and whatever energy I have left in this life will be expended to optimising what happens to children in the classroom.

I believe that kindness is a great wisdom. I am not talking about kindness based on the assuaging of one's own conscious. There is a cost when one implements real kindness and it is a sad fact of life that it is only rarely I have encountered, or for that matter experienced, such beneficence.

The people representing Steiner education might like to reflect that they had someone representing them at the highest level and that they gave that person (with a few exceptions in the UK in the early 1970s) no support despite my efforts continually over thirty-five years to make contact and during that time work with them – each and every attempt was ignored or rejected (for the most part, politely in the UK, rudely in the USA, and dreadfully in New Zealand!).

They might like to reflect that if they had supported my work, they would have had someone in the UK teaching teachers the Waldorf approach for the last thirty-five years and who had contacts at the highest level. Would that have made a difference? I believe so. The USA situation was far worse than the UK but again they might like to reflect they had someone teaching Waldorf courses at a state university and could something have been built over the last twenty-eight years – I certainly think so.

Although I believe New Zealand is the best country to live in, my Waldorf experiences there are nothing short of a horror story. What occurred to myself and family was beyond any form of human decency. They had someone who made representations at the very highest level. I gave a presentation to the Ministry of Education officials and twice, albeit briefly, the Minister; one result of which was, I believe, the setting up of the Picot Commission in 1986 which eventually brought about enormous and much needed changes to New Zealand pre-tertiary education.

Regarding “Steiner people” what I have seen is people wanting to satisfy their own mindset. Basically, it has been about control and power and obviously I would disagree that that it is what it should be all about.

What is it about? It is about serving children and seeing that their wellbeing and learning is optimised. My own experience is that many of those people have also acted upon the lowest ethical standards of any organization that I know and they are supposed to represent the future – I do not think so.

However, unpopular a view, I also believe that Steiner was withdrawn at the very early age of sixty-four because he was doing so much harm and the results of his excessive hubris are there for everyone to see. Obviously, he gave us an enormous amount of valuable information but then wanting to build his own organization, start his own church etc, and indicate, in my humble opinion, a lack of vision of where the very things he was implementing would lead to.

I am clear that it is Steiner people who have destroyed the impulse (that I apparently carry) of providing the Waldorf approach to hundreds of thousands of teachers and millions of children.

That, of course, is an enormous karmic debt which they will have to clear. I look at, in particular, the UK but also the USA and I believe their societies could have been far different if the Waldorf impulse had been allowed to flourish beyond the confines of those individuals who from my perspective, unhealthily want to control the impulse.

The consequence of that is that content and methodology that should have been available to teachers during that time was unavailable and many millions of children suffer because of their actions. They do not care enough and it is very rare that I have seen anything else but self-interest. Tragically, they do not realize that.

For those addicted to his ideology the following is worth reflecting on. Steiner, *“Moreover, I should like to point out to you that the real aim and object of our Anthroposophical education is not to found as many*

*Anthroposophical schools as possible. It is, of course, necessary that there should be certain model schools where the methods are carried out in detail. It is a crying need of our days that there should be such schools. But our education concerns itself with the methods of teaching, and is essentially a new way and art of education, so every teacher can bring it into this work, in whatever kind of school he/she happens to be. There can be no question of creating revolutions in existing institutions. Our task is rather to give indications of a way of teaching arising out of our anthroposophical knowledge of man.”*

I read somewhere in the 1970s how Steiner described that there was no God-given right for humans to expect to continually evolve if they made decisions that would halt or regress the movement to the next stage of human consciousness.

It would be the final irony if Steiner himself and what his followers have done in his name bring about the very destruction they are here to prevent! Meanwhile, I read a forecast by the USA Geological Survey stating that a major earthquake will hit California by 2037. For those of us who also interpret earth's evolution as spiritual as well as physical, perhaps an examination of what is occurring in California at present is also much needed!

### **April 2008**

Unable to receive response from Ukraine by the end of 2007, I started to explore other Eastern European countries and made connections in Bulgaria. I visited Bulgaria in March 2008 and gave several presentations; the result of which is two universities are in the process of offering me posts. More importantly, a school wishes to adopt my programme. We are now exploring ways in which the programme could be made available to other Bulgarian teachers, even perhaps making the school a model school. Updates will be posted. It is September 2008 and I am still unable to receive response from Bulgaria so I am putting work aside for present - wonder what is next in store!

### **2009**

As you can see from the above for nearly all my life I have been non-political. After seeing what was happening in Gaza, I decided to make a contribution towards seeking some sort of justice for the Palestinians and to put my education work aside. I gathered research and decided to write an article. Within a short space of time the article had expanded into a book, *“Are You Complicit?”*

I do not seek to make any financial gain from this endeavour and any income accruing will be given to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) - main page is at <http://members.cox.net/non-violence/index.html>. Please note that pdfs may take time to load. I guess that I am going to be busy for a while - thought something would turn up!

### **July 2009**

I decided, for a number of reasons, to try and plan a trip to New Zealand. The only anthroposophist I am in contact with is someone from the UK, who has been in New Zealand for decades, whom I have known for over thirty-five years. Sadly, he was of little help although he did suggest that I email his ex-wife.

I did this and included the following. *“You may remember many years ago, in 1973, I introduced Waldorf courses at what is now Mid-Lancs University. I contacted The Guardian to see if they were interested in the courses (Shirley Poulson) and she was. Anyway to cut a long story short the Bristol Waldorf School was in “birth pangs” and I decided their need was greater than mine and so I arranged for Shirley to come and visit you and you may remember I also came down from Preston etc.*

*Secondly, and I don't know if you know this, soon after I arrived in New Zealand in 1985 I gave a presentation to Nolene MacDonald, Chief Inspector of Education, South Island. I guess something resonated for soon after she arranged for me to travel to Wellington and give a similar presentation to the New Zealand hierarchy and briefly meet the Minister - soon after the Picot Commission was established and I made a very detailed submission. I am glad to say my recommendations were accepted and implemented.*

*Later, I met the Minister again and described to him how the Waldorf schools were struggling financially (as certain people in Christchurch were trying to get me deported I really had to dig deep inside myself to do that) and was the timing good for submissions to apply to “integrate into” the State system. He answered in the affirmative and I passed the information on to the Christchurch Waldorf School and you know the rest.*

*Soon after John Davidson et al got rid of me from the school although they failed in their attempts to deport myself and family - even then I had to go to Wellington and argue my case with Head of Immigration to whom I am very grateful for believing me; he personally took charge of my application etc. Once we had received New Zealand citizenship there was nothing John Davidson et al could do. I won't even start to going in to what spiritual powers were having what influence and where!*

*Since then I haven't been in touch with any anthroposophists except for your good self and that has been extremely sporadic. Anyway I am now writing my book, entitled “Justice for Palestinians” and I have already been advised that there is certainly danger in what I am doing (I can fill you in on details if you require them) so I need to come to New Zealand to sort out my affairs. I will leave it to you whether you want to help. An early response would be appreciated. I can bring an airbed and pump if this is required. I sincerely hope you can help.*

*I guess it is water under the bridge but nearly all my working life I should have been teaching Waldorf courses to student and serving teachers at university level, including for the last 20 years in New Zealand. Perhaps imagine that if I had been teaching for the last 40 years the numbers of teachers I could have touched and through them the hundreds of thousands of children, but, sadly, it hasn't happened! Take care, David (I enclosed my letter to Chris Carter, Minister of Education and his response.)”*

**Letter to Chris Carter, Minister of Education** – *“Dear Mr. Carter, I am a New Zealand citizen running a New Zealand based business in the USA. Brief history - I arrived in New Zealand in 1985 at a time of great change. Like you, initially I had been a teacher, in my case teaching large classes in the dock area of the East End of London. Later, I was involved in teacher training in UK and USA but after realizing the systems were highly politicised, and were therefore unchangeable unless at the whim of politicians, I moved to New Zealand.*

*Within two weeks of arriving, I phoned the then District Manager for South Island, Nolene MacDonald (Ministry of Education) and a few days later gave her a presentation. At that point I thought my responsibility ended so I was surprised some days later to receive a phone call from her and she told me that she had arranged for me to fly to Wellington and give a presentation to the officials at the Ministry. I also briefly met the Minister, Russell Marshall (I did also meet him briefly again in Christchurch).*

*Sometime later the Picot Commission was established and I made very detailed submissions. I am glad to say that nearly all the points I described were accepted by the Commission and as you know the Commission's report to Parliament was accepted and became law in 1988. One consequence of the implementation of the Picot Report was that today about 90% of education pre-tertiary spending occurs in schools; the figure for the UK is 68%; for the USA 54%.*

*In a very short time I had achieved all that I wanted to, educationally, in this life and I settled down to a very pleasant life-style in Christchurch. However, it was not to be and I returned to California in 1985, eventually established a branch of my NZ non-profit and attempting to make information and whatever expertise and experience I possess available to interested parties.*

*Why am I writing to you? Last year I visited Ukraine twice but at present their systems are so corrupt any input I may be able to make in the future will have to wait. However, in March I made my first visit to Bulgaria and as you can see from the enclosed my presentations were well received.*

*In addition, I met one of the people who is, at present, submitting reports to the Ministry of possible options for the decentralization of pre-tertiary Bulgarian education; a time of change, similar to 1985 New Zealand. It is not often that one can have an input into changes in education on this scale but what happened to me in New Zealand is very rare if not unique, so I am not expecting anything like that.*

*However, I would like to propose to you that as New Zealand went through a similar process (1985-1987) it may be possible for your officials, who obviously have experience in these matters, to offer support of some sort to their Bulgarian counterparts and I am hoping you will consider this.*

*I had hoped by now I would be making plans to spend my retirement in New Zealand - I am 70 24th April; it is by far, the best civilized country I have ever lived in but I still, apparently, have other work and responsibilities so I shall pursue these options until whatever needs working out is fulfilled; but hopefully eventually I shall be able to return. I hope your officials might see fit to respond; all correspondence will be confidential."*

**The Minister's response** (30 May 08) might be of interest to you (available at bottom of business plan at <http://molletlearningacademy.com/corporate/MLABusinessPlan.pdf>), "*Dear David, Thank you for your email dated 18 April 2008. Your email has been passed to the Ministry of Education but I also wanted to reply to you directly myself. I was interested to read of your early teaching days: I was a supply teacher in the London Borough of Hounslow, possibly around the same time as yourself!*

*I wish to personally thank you for your contribution to education you have made not only to New Zealand but around the world. I am sure, like myself, you have gained much satisfaction from working in the sector and seeing the impact you have on so many young learners.*

*Good luck with your work in Bulgaria. If you are able to make even a small fraction of the impact there that you did here, they will go a long way to being successful. I look forward to following the results of Bulgaria's decentralization and the support you provide them. And I do hope you make it back to New Zealand to enjoy your retirement, there is no place better!  
Yours sincerely, Hon Chris Carter, Minister of Education."*

**Jane's response** was that she did not feel it was right to use her address. My reply was succinct "*Thank you for your email. Don't concern yourself. If the truth be known, I expected nothing more, sad but true.*" She ignored all the points I had made (sadly I had expected this).

If the reader does approach, for whatever reason, an anthroposophist, please be careful. It may change the direction of your life and the consequences may not be what you originally intended! That is my main reason for adding all this.

## **27 July 2009**

I decided to email Auckland teacher training institutions to see if any are interested in offering Waldorf courses to student and serving teachers. I tried this previously in the late 1980s but I assume they were not interested as I received no response. Perhaps times have changed, perhaps they haven't - we shall see.

## **Oct 2009**

After writing the first draft of the book "*Are You Complicit?*" about Gaza, I decided I should renew my energy. Two backpacking trips (Sierra Nevada and Catalina Island, 6 and 3 days respectively) and a very enjoyable trip to Oregon, Washington and Canada (we also camped out on the car ferry to Skagway, Alaska and return), I decided to go to New Zealand.

Much happened and I am moving there in January 2010. I am already involved in many education initiatives, not one of them planned previously so once more it seems I am going to be more than a little occupiers! I shall update soon.

## **2010**

I moved to Auckland in January 2010. Almost immediately after my arrival, I established the Auckland Line Dance Club (ALDC). I also contacted Peter and the Titirangi Rudolf Steiner School but did not receive any response from either. I describe elsewhere what happened to me in mid-February. It is enough to say here that I became very ill and that I had no option but to return to San Diego.

It took me a long time to recover but eventually I recovered although I believe that what occurred still is having an effect on me. Because of my “illness,” I put aside both being involved in any “Steiner activity” as well as posting or anything else regarding the injustices perpetrated on the Palestinians.

In late 2010, a person contacted me regarding some of my education material that I had uploaded to the internet. Originally from the UK, she, Angel, and her husband, Steve, (originally from France) made and produced videos. After much discussion we decided that we should plan to produce a documentary describing which countries are successful and perhaps more importantly, which countries are not, as far, according to international comparisons, in optimising childrens’ wellbeing and learning.

## **2011**

Originally, Angel was going to come to California but this plan had to be put on hold when for reasons that I did not know at the time, they decided that they were going to home school their children. Eventually after discussion, I decided to travel to Auckland where we planned to write the script and then film the documentary.

I arrived on the very day they were going to start home schooling their children; three beautiful girls of ten, six and four. Sadly, the Angel and Steve’s parental skills left, from my viewpoint, a great deal to desire but this isn’t the place to describe what happened to me during my stay with them.

However, Angel was very keen to interview me regarding my experiences with the Steiner world. I hadn’t come to New Zealand for this purpose but with reservations I agreed. I believe she wanted me to paint the whole Steiner world with a black brush but I wasn’t willing to do this.

My experiences had been more than disappointing and our experiences in Christchurch had been brutish. You can read a transcript of the interviews at “App\_6 Steiner interviews 1 & 2.docx.”

I am not sure whether it is the right decision but in spring 2011 I decided I would plan to return to New Zealand later in the year. Should I attempt to contact with Peter Patterson whom I had known for over thirty-five years? Should I also make contact with the Titirangi Steiner School as my house, whether it was coincidence or not, was also in Titirangi?

I emailed them both. The initial response from Peter was that I knew several Davids and didn’t know which one I was. I emailed him again explaining who I was but did not receive any further correspondence from him. I heard from the school and was told they would put a notice in their newsletter explaining that I was exploring the possibility of renting a room. I haven’t heard from them since.

## **2012**

I have been involved in education nearly all my working life and it would be strange if I didn’t believe that I possess experience and expertise on the best ways in which to optimise students’ wellbeing and learning. Sadly, I have seen and experienced the politicisation of the education systems both in the UK and USA with disastrous results for their societies and economies. I am now seeing a similar process occurring in New Zealand and obviously believe it would be wrong to idly stand by while IMHO children are being damaged.

It hasn’t been easy when knowing that one has something to contribute yet being powerless as one’s attempts to contribute are ignored. In the end one hopes that one is adding something somewhere and that it is not pointless to continue. To be continued.