

THE E.F.L. GAZETTE

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A PLATFORM FOR CONTROVERSY

The idea of an E.F.L. newspaper has been mooted and discussed in E.F.L. circles for at least the past two years.

An enormous number of people are now involved in E.F.L. as Principals, Administrators, teachers, authors or publishers of E.F.L. materials, Audio-Visual manufacturers, Examiners, and Inspectors. The mushrooming of new schools continues unabated, the number of students coming into the country to study English has continued to rise each year (despite the occasional fluctuations that unnerve even the most hardened Principal), — at least until recently — and an increasing number of foreign countries have turned to English as their main second language, which in turn has created a demand for more Schools and Institutes of English abroad and

put heavy pressure on the British Council's facilities and information services.

At the beginning of the 1960's, when ARELS was founded, it was relatively easy to get a job in a Language School if one was articulate and English was one's native tongue (often even these criteria were not strictly applied). Since then, E.F.L. has changed dramatically; it has become far more sophisticated as the "experts" have moved in, it has become "big business", and it has become an attractive source of alternative teaching employment at a time of cut-backs and diminishing opportunities in "mainstream education". Yet until now, E.F.L. has been one of the few "trades" without its own newspaper — and this implies no disrespect towards periodicals such as the ELT Journal, or, indeed,

the ARELS Journal itself. The latter in particular has certain limitations inbuilt into its role as the official publication of E.F.L.'s watchdog.

The E.F.L. GAZETTE, then, is envisaged as providing both a source of news and information about the E.F.L. world and general events, both home and abroad, which may have an impact on it, and a platform from which views on prevailing controversies within E.F.L. can be proclaimed and debated. It is not and will not be the voice of any one School, but instead will provide a forum for anyone involved in E.F.L. in whatever capacity. Produced by an Editorial committee representing all sectors of E.F.L. activity, it will initially be published at three-weekly intervals, but eventually as a fortnightly. Guest articles are invited and welcome —

the newspaper would indeed be meaningless without them — though there can be no fees paid for written contributions until the EFL GAZETTE has achieved some measure of financial viability; the news page will depend to some extent on an effective chain of correspondents and "stringers" and the Diary of Events will be a little thin unless those Schools and organizations holding conferences, seminars, courses, and other activities they wish to publicize, let the E.F.L. GAZETTE know about them well in advance.

E.F.L. is going through a period of change and transformation; there is intense debate on such crucial issues as recognition, the role of ARELS and FELCO in the supervision and control of private Schools, new teaching methods, and on the direction in which E.F.L.

should now head (see Rumours and stories and abuses have been years, encouraged and invented by the n

Though the worst of them to be behind us, the shady operators staff and students alike the public image of the and those associated E.F.L. GAZETTE will malpractices (where unequivocal proof a dutiful eye on the libel will also give regular groups — the various reports, the E.F.L. teachers to give two examples normally find it difficult hearing. In the end, though the E.F.L. GAZETTE future, whether the end be worthwhile, only you

‘DOWNWARD TREND ALARMS EFL SCHOOLS’

by OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

The latest statistics on the number of foreign nationals entering the UK so far this year, issued jointly by the Department of Trade and the British Tourist Authority, have caused ripples of unease in EFL Schools throughout the country. The figures show that there were 4,211,000 arrivals in the first half of 1978 — a 2% decrease on the equivalent period last year. The Press Release also confirms the "Continuing downward trend apparent since November 1977... arrivals of nationals of EEC countries in June 1978, were 462,000, a decrease of 6% on the June 1977 figure. On a country basis, only nationals of Denmark and Italy showed increases, up 5% and 12% respectively". Even worse news was that the total of 2,653,000 for the second quarter of this year — i.e.: May to August, traditionally the peak months in the EFL world — equalled a 3% drop on the same period in 1977. Although such statistics are not in themselves conclusive evidence of a decline in the number of foreign students coming into the country — they cover all arrivals, including tourists and business visitors, and the seasonally adjusted figures, out

soon, should provide a better basis for judging trends — they nonetheless carry with them worrying implications for EFL Schools.

It is no secret that many Schools in London, Bournemouth, and Brighton experienced something of a slump in student enrolment during the summer, and all the indications are that this was the pattern in other parts of the UK as well. The British Council Aid to Refugees, and other similar organizations, report far more scholarship and reduced fee places than usual were available in Schools during the summer for foreign nationals granted political asylum or classified as "special cases". The brighter than usual start to the new Academic Year — reports coming in show enrolments generally up on this time last year — has only partly dispelled the gloom and foreboding: EFL Schools tend to rely on a busy summer season to provide them with the spare cash to finance the purchase of new equipment, improve their premises, embark on new projects, and tide them over the thinner times most go through at some stage during the winter. A poor summer can spell real danger for the smaller schools, particularly

for new ones still struggling to find their feet and get themselves known, and lead to cutbacks or the shelving of plans even in the larger, richer schools, which invariably have far heavier overheads in terms of rent and salaries.

The drop in numbers may prove to have been a temporary phenomenon; all the same, it has served to strengthen the prevailing view that EFL has now reached saturation point. The number of students coming into the UK to study English as a Foreign Language has not kept pace with the astonishing proliferation of Schools and 'Tutorial Colleges', some allegedly of a dubious nature; in other words, there are not enough students to go round to keep everyone, ARELS member or not, comfortably in business. Many Schools are said to be opening up GCE courses in other subjects, or considering doing so, as a form of insurance against any possible future drying-up of their EFL intake; if the situation does deteriorate, competition could get cut-throat and standards drop. Although EFL can still be classified as a "boom industry" the next set of figures will be awaited with more than usual interest.

EFL Schools Target of Leveller attack

What probably ranks as the most outspoken attack yet on the establishment was published in the latest (19th October) issue of *Leveller* ("an independent socialist magazine produced by the Collective"). In an article captioned "Lingo Halls Rake It In", it lists the 73 members of ARELS and 46 of FELCO as having "a special of respectability", castigates St. Giles College, The Berlitz English International, and the Language Tutorial Centre for English and enthruses over the ILTB's (the English Union) programme of unionisation of E.F.L. Schools and their take-over by teachers. The "two Schools in London run on co-lines" (Marble Arch Intensive English School and Interco-op) favourably as the alternative to the set-ups in other languages. As one teacher told the E.F.L. GAZETTE, though, "there a of decent Schools charging less than Interco-op's £68.0p p and offering just as much, including free places to refugee A few wall-posters don't make a radical School". A *Leveller* spokesman admitted to us over the phone that letters disputing the article had been received within a day of its appearance.



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