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Her father was a Major-General in the British army. She obtained a medical degree and practiced as a GP until 1961. She worked with the distinguished child therapist Dr . Margaret Lowenfeld, but never trained formally. She pioneered 'methods for conflict understanding' which she called Creative
Rachel Pinney was born 11th July 1909, the daughter of a Major-General. She obtained a medical degree and practiced as a GP until 1961. On leaving the medical profession, Rachel contacted Dr. Margaret Lowenfeld, the distinguished child therapist. Rachel learnt her methods but never trained formally. This period resulted in the pioneering of her 'methods for conflict understanding' which she called Creative Listening, and Children's Hours, the former incorporated as a limited company in 1967. These techniques were widely used by experts working therapeutically with children. In 1977 Rachel went to New York and treated a four year old boy suffering from autism. This resulted in her publication 'Bobby, Breakthrough of an Autistic Child' (1983). Rachel was briefly married to Luigi Coccuzzi with whom she had one daughter and two sons. She was a member of CND from 1961 and openly declared herself a lesbian in 1989. She died 19th October 1995 aged 86.

My friend Dr Rachel Pinney, whom I mentioned in a blog over in the arena, was another of the remarkable women I have known. [I have known some remarkable men, too, and may get around to blogging about them sometime.] She invented the technique of Creative Listening, which was a method intended to circumvent the usual shallow inattentiveness of so many conversations, and to prompt the participants to start really hearing each other.

The unique feature of Creative Listening is that you practise it with someone who has a point of view opposed to yours and who agrees that while one of you explains their position as fully and clearly as possible, the other undertakes not to argue or to answer back, and only to interrupt if there is something they don't understand which needs clarifying.

Dr Pinney was a Quaker and an ardent anti-nuclear weapons campaigner. She accordingly used her method primarily to engage with supporters of nuclear weapons. However, she also realised that it could be applied to many other topics, and one day she suggested to me that we should apply it to homosexual law reform. This was in the 1960s, when the Wolfenden Report's proposals that homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should be decriminalised were being widely debated in parliament and the press, and so the subject was more in the public's awareness than it had previously been.

So on a warm summer's evening Dr Pinney and I set out from Earls Court Station to hear what we could get passers-by to say about homosexuality. It was, in fact, Dr Pinney's first Listen in London; she had previously been Listening only in the provinces. Usually, she told me, people never refused to talk; and I would not have thought that homosexuality was an especially closed subject in Earls Court, even for those who disapproved of it.

But hostile talkers proved difficult to find, despite Dr Pinney's winningly persuasive sales pitch. Marching up to front door bells or accosting ladies tending their front gardens, she would explain that she had been touring Britain Listening for Peace, but tonight I am Listening on homosexual law reform! A few of those thus addressed hastily bade us good evening, looking as if they consigned us to the depths of depravity. But most of them never batted an eyelid at the dread word, smiling as unconcernedly as if we had been selling washing powder or canvassing for local council elections.

As most were on our side, Dr Pinney varied her routine with Listening on the Bomb, which gave her all her longest Listens that evening. We encountered only one forthright opponent, and he predictably said he was not prepared to discuss homosexuality in the street [or, I suspected, anywhere else]. When pressed by Dr Pinney to give a reason, he replied: I was forty years in the Navy, madam, and that's quite good enough reason. Good day to you!

I really am rather irritated that this piece only attracts such trivial comments. If you've nothing better to say about it, why bother? It's this sort of constant belittlement that makes me wonder whether it's worthwhile keeping on with the bother of thinking up, researching, and writing posts here. It's not exactly effortless, you know.
If you’re writing for yourself, the relevance or profundity of the following comments really doesn’t matter. Likewise if you’re writing for readers rather than commenters. I know for a fact (because I keep a pretty tight rein on my statistics) that I have far more readers than commenters. I imagine most bloggers are in the same boat.

Each of us blogs for many and complex reasons. I blog as an outlet for my memories and thoughts, and in the hope of interesting others. I do not want to ‘convert’ anybody to my point of view. But dialogue is important to me, as my mobility is now restricted and I am virtually housebound, so social contacts for conversation are limited to the occasional visitor. I do not write ‘for’ my site visitors or commentators, but I am naturally interested to know what they think of my blogs.

One of Dr Pinney’s devices - which might have been useful for Big Brother - was to make the person speaking hold a conch shell or other suitable token, which they did not pass on to the next would-be speaker until they had finished saying everything they wanted to. Only the person holding the shell was allowed to speak; the others had to listen.

She had made a considerable impression on me when I heard her on, I think, Radio 4 talking about Creative Listening and I made a considerable effort to track her down and contact her. She invited me to come and meet her at her flat (near Pentonville Prison if memory serves well) and I found her equally impressive face to face. I became something of an acolyte and purchased several copies of Creative Listening which I pressed on friends and colleagues. Sadly, I seem to have lost the copies I kept, though I may still have the computer transcription I made. I still have my copy of Bobby.

Hello to all Rachel Pinney commenters and listeners alike, I also worked with Rachel in Toronto and turned 60 this past year. As well I replaced Rachel in New York City while Rachel visited LA, to follow up on a possibility of beginning a new Center. During that time I worked with a young autistic boy, Rachel later wrote about. I was part of a team including Mimi Schacter... if you are out there Mimi, I would love to get back in contact.

anticant is the blogname of a lifelong free speech and civil rights campaigner. A lot of his life since WW2 has been taken up with battling against cruel and over-bossy laws, censorship, censoriousness, and Nanny Knows Best types. Now elderly and in poor health, anticant hopes his memories and thoughts will be of interest to those engaged in today's struggles for freedom, democracy, and a more hopeful tomorrow. e-mail: anticant@hotmail.co.uk

The afternoons during this training are devoted to play. As we do not have children to practise on, we practice on one another. This gives the opportunity to play as a child our selves, in pairs taking turns as the playing child or the ‘witness’ to the play. Use of creative art materials will encourage the spirit of play and enable you to be familiar with paint, clay, sand etc. An important part of this training is the feedback and discussion time that follows the exercises.

This clip includes children at a mainstream primary school, with a tiny few with special needs present, hence my gestures and some signing - but it was not a full Lis'n Tell session as such! I had been invited to launch a storytelling project amongst eight schools, and worked with two thousand children in one day! performing and answering questions about how to be a storyteller...

I also remind of the situation recently written about at some length when during the early part of my course to become qualified and state recognised child care officer, I wrote to a Member of Parliament about the appalling housing circumstances of a family I had been asked to visit as part of my practical work placement. I had not identified the family or where they lived except the city in question, Birmingham and I had previously written about the poor housing conditions in the constituency area of the Member of Parliament when I worked there for three months undertaking practical with the Family Service Unit. By coincidence my letter had coincided with a debate in the House of Commons about the appalling conditions in the private rented sector which was then known as Rackmanism after a notorious housing landlord and considerable publicity was given to what I had said under the banner of Twilight zone families. I had known none of this until contacted
by a local journalist where the MP had been given my name in confidence and when asked if I was prepared to acknowledge that I was the source of the information, I had agreed to do so in order to confirm its authenticity and validity, but explained that it had been gained through a practical work placement and therefore I was not in a position to divulge the name of the family without their prior consent and that the particular circumstances had been drawn to the attention of the housing authority. There would have been no problem if I had asked the journalist not to disclose my name and circumstances or the disclosure restricted to a couple of lines in the back pages of the newspaper had not been drawn to the attention of the local authority and to my course and indeed although I was required to apologise to the local authority and the family in question, the local authority offered me a job and the incident became the subject of an annual seminar on the course about the role of social work and politics, after I had become prominent publishing Parliament and Social Work, a digest about references to Social Work in Parliament and writing a monthly column about the same subject.

Indeed there would also have been no problem at all had I suggested to the family that they seek the help of their local Member of Parliament or the help of the media to help their cause for rehousing. While I may well have advised them to do the former I was always against the involvement of the media in such cases because of the potential negative affects upon the family or individual in question. In this instance I was not revealing legally forbidden information but information which could have led to legal problems for the course and for the local authority and therefore I was jeopardising my position. In mitigation I was not doing so in terms of a party political issue or purpose or for personal advance or gain. I had come across a major social problem and a family caught up in such a situation which I felt my Member of Parliament contact who had a special interest in housing matter would find helpful.

Only a couple of years before I had been invited to the House of Lords to attend a debate on Prison Conditions by the President of the Prison Reform Society following the publication of Inside Story by the Society, of 100 suggestions for improving prisons, by a group of ex CND prisoners which I had chaired. and during the debate which the President had opened I was taken for tea with two other colleagues from the Reform Council, one the sister of a peer entitled to sit in the House of Lords, the secretary of a Civil Service Association representing the experience of a former colleague who had been imprisoned for revealing classified information to her lover and a Bishop who was asked to join us. He warmly greeted the secretary of the Civil Services association and my colleague when told she was the sister of a member of the House, but when he introduced me saying I had been to prison for six months without explaining further, the look of disapproval and coldness of the greeting was evident to everyone. I subsequently told this story at a criminology seminar attending by first and second class honours post graduates at Oxford University and I mentioned the Bishop by name and afterwards one of the students came up and said her father was inclined to see things in black and white.

I tell the story in part to warn of the consequences of telling tales to strangers without first ensuring that you know who is present but mainly to remind that civil servants have gone to prison for revealing classified information. It also a two way process I have also written about the Holy Loch Demonstration in which I had disclosed precisely what was planned to the police as part of my Gandhian approach and which led to a formal warning from the Commander of the Flag Ship Scotland but had not led to me arrest whereas the others organisers were arrested and some went to prison. The consequence is that the authorities were well prepared for the seaborne attempt to board the supply vessel in the loch as the submarine had departed. However I had only advised of the use of canoes and had resigned when Pat Arrowsmith announced at the last moment that had acquired the use of a large motor launch and that a film director was willing to use his substantial yacht and that persons who had not participated in the match from London or been prepared in advance would be allowed to participate in the seaborne demonstration. I was in the launch and were given a powerful hosing every time we attempted to move to a ladder at the side of the supply ship. We were nearly sunk which was their intention and then became marooned when the engine ceased to work and drifted in the loch close to a large tethered buoy. An unnamed small launch then successfully moved the buoy which towered over us towards the film Director’s yacht as its stopped to pick up demonstrators from our launch causing it some damage and then threatening to
smash into us. However the departure of the majority of the demonstrators from our vessel had the effect of allowing the engines to restart and we were able to move away and going in for another drenching before this time the engines cut out for good. We were rescued by Dr Rachel Pinney and wealthy doctor who lived in a large fine house in Chelsea, She had one of those cars that turned into a boat on which she had painted the international red cross sign and was there to pick up people if they went into the loch for any reason and she had towed us on to the bank. We had a good chat and she gave me her address and telephone number and asked me to call in for tea, which I subsequently did, noting the finery of the furnishings and that she was attended by not one but two young men who may have been younger than myself, It was years later that she was subject of media investigation and may have involved the police given the youth of some of the of the young men and for other reasons.

Dr Rachel Pinney, 1909- 1995 was one of the Direct Action Committee's band of tax refusers in the early '60s and participated in the DAC's walk from London to Holy Loch -- the base for Britain's soon-to-be-deployed Polaris nuclear submarines -- in 1961. Later in the '60s Rachel opened a peace café® in Fulham; she was also an out lesbian; went to Greenham in the '80s; and was an active campaigner in one way or another to the end of her life. In her professional life, Rachel was an innovator in play therapy. "Creative listening", which used various means to get people to focus on what others were saying, had a major effect in both her professional work with children and her political work. There were meetings where a speaker held a conch shell until they were finished speaking; at other times, one person would speak and the others would wait until the next meeting to respond to them. From the mid-'60s onwards, Rachel kept silent on Wednesdays as a protest against nuclear weapons; this created some complications when she was summonsed to court and had to communicate by written notes.

Returning Home to Wallington I recounted what had happened to a young socialist female friend who was a single parent and who in a junior clerical capacity worked at the Home Office. When describing the incident with the launch and other matters she commented that they, meaning the Home Office, had known all that I described including my walking out of the Glasgow meeting because what was to take place was to be different from what I had advised the police. The reason why I am able to disclose the disclosure is that my young friend was subsequently murdered and I believe the person responsible was never apprehended. Because I had known the young woman my mother advised that the police had been in contact and asked to contact them if I had any information which might be of assistance. I had consulted the child care course director before doing so, given the previous incident involving the Member of Parliament and she cautioned against my doing so saying that further publicity might make my position difficult. However I felt that that I had known the young woman sufficiently well and that she had said things about an adult relationship she was having that ought to be disclosed in case no one else had done so. I therefore contacted the local police and a made a formal statement which was passed on to the investigating police and the coroner but I was not called or directly involved after to that which confirmed that if you do things in right way at the right time and your conscience is clear then you have nothing to fear from the police or the authorities.

There is therefore good and bad ways about approaching confidential matters and much depends on the approach used and the circumstances. Winston Churchill, for example had a source within the Government who disclosed highly classified information which Churchill revealed about Britain's lack of preparedness for a war with Germany. This was important public interest information which can be said to have led to Churchill becoming Prime Minister and Britain surviving until the USA entered World War II. However the individual in question was breaking the law as well as his contract of employment and Churchill should not have given any encouragement and disclosed the disclosure to the proper authorities. What if the individual had been releasing this and similar information also to the Germans or other potential enemies?

I therefore do not share the view of those who argue that it is job of the opposition or back bench Members of Parliament to seek or accept information gained by anyone employed in the public services which is regarded as confidential or secret and in most circumstances the role of the Member of Parliament should be to report the offer of information or the disclosure of information to
the appropriate authorities advising the individual concerned that they were doing so. I am particularly concerned if the information is then used for party political purposes or if the individual concerned is disclosing the information for party political purposes.

There are exceptions to the general rule if example the information is genuinely in the public interest irrespective of how it might be used politically. However if the information involves illegal activity such as what happened in the USA in relation to Watergate and that political figures or senior civil servants were intentionally misleading or lying to Parliament then both the information provider and the Member of Parliament have duties also they also should be aware of the potential implications as well as official protections.

I was to be tested in a way which threatened my future and that of my family when in the mid 1980’s the Militant Tendency had gained a significant influence within a National and local branch of a Trades Union and wilfully mislead residential child care staff into a strike in what was then a closed shop situation. Staff were threatened and the welfare of children in public care was put at serious risk. My first task was to gain the support of management staff to put the interests of children first and which in turn would threaten their immediate and future livelihood. I therefore obtained approval from a cross party special committee of the local authority to invite management staff to assist me in providing care for the children in their own homes and to given them a written undertaking that in the event of their trades union taking successful action against them their position with the local authority would not be affected. I then interviewed each member of the management staff and explained the position and what the undertaking meant or did not mean. I then interviewed each of the residential officers who were on strike and offered them the same deal, although in this instance I asked them to request their union to hold an immediate further ballot for a return to work as I was already aware that a majority had been bullied or misled into strike action and wished to return to duties and the approach was the best of resolving the situation. Understandably the union prevaricated but did reballot, reported the outcome of a return to work to the union leadership and then insisted on a no victimization agreement on the part of the employers in relation to their members who had initiated and continued to support the strike action. However they refused to give a similar undertaking in relation to myself and the management staff who had enabled the children to continue with their lives as before.

http://edufb.net/16563.pdf
http://edufb.net/14137.pdf