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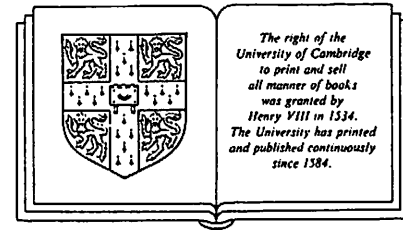
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TALES OUT OF SCHOOL

Rhino

by **David Leland**

Editor **Paul Kelley**
The Television Literacy Project



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Tales out of School
Birth of a Nation
Flying into the Wind
Rhino
Made in Britain

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Contents

Introduction

Going into care

Being in care

What should have happened

Working for change

Useful addresses

Credits

Cast

Rhino

Appendix

A videocassette of this film is available to schools and colleges through the following British suppliers. (Please check for prices at the time of ordering.)

Concord Films Council Ltd
201 Felixstowe Road
Ipswich
Suffolk IP3 9BJ
(Videocassettes are also available for hire.)

The Guild Organisation Ltd
Guild House
Peterborough PE2 9PZ
(Videocassettes are also available for hire.)

Cambridge University Press
(Home Sales Department)
The Edinburgh Building
Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge CB2 2RU

Introduction

What happens to Angie in *Rhino* is happening to many young people today. And because her story is a common one it is easy to say what happens to people like her. The future looks bleak. Going into care *can* be a positive experience for young people, but care is a bit like being on a downwards escalator – superhuman efforts are needed by someone to stop the descent. It did not look as if anyone in *Rhino* was going to make that sort of effort.

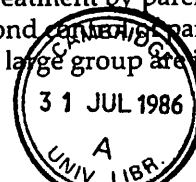
Rhino is about children's rights. Angie's misfortune is that she is young; she is being punished for an offence (truancy) which she could not commit if she was an adult. *Rhino* is also about racism, and the failure of education and social services systems to meet the needs of young people, or even to listen to what they are saying.

Going into care

Being put 'in care' means that the responsibilities of parents or guardians are taken away and given to the local authority. This means that the local authority can decide where the child will live, where it will go to school, and, potentially, who the child will see (children can be prevented from seeing their parents, for example). There are over twenty different ways of being put into care.

About seven in every thousand children are in care. About a third of the children in care are in 'voluntary care' – looked after by the local council because the parents or guardians have agreed to this. There can be many reasons for this: the parent is ill, or the family is homeless, or cannot look after the child for other reasons (usually linked with poverty – there are virtually no middle class children in care).

The rest of the children are in 'compulsory care' following a court order. About an eighth of all children in care are there because they have been found guilty of an offence. Other reasons include ill-treatment by parents, being 'exposed to moral danger', 'beyond their parents', or awaiting trial or sentence. A fairly large group are in care because they are



'of compulsory school age within the meaning of the Education Act 1944 and not receiving full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude'.

Few people are happy with the current care system. Parents and young people are appalled at the power social workers have over their lives and by their lack of rights. Social workers are bewildered by the legal complexity of the system. Social workers are also blamed on the one hand for taking too many children from parents, and on the other hand for allowing child deaths.

Two grounds for putting children into care have been particular targets for criticism: being 'guilty of an offence' and 'not receiving full-time education'. A care order used to be seen as quite a light sentence for an offence, until the government woke up to the fact that care could last until the young person was 18 or even 19. No doubt people like Angie would prefer a short spell in a Detention Centre to three years in care. Since 1983 care orders can only be given as a sentence if this is 'appropriate because of the seriousness of the offence' and the young person is 'in need of care and control which he is unlikely to receive unless the court makes an order'. It is now much less likely that a care order will be made when the offence is not serious.

Putting children in care because they are not receiving 'full-time education' has also been found to be an unsatisfactory way of dealing with young people. As in *Rhino*, truancy often has something to do with the sort of education that is being offered in schools. Indeed many thousands of pupils who attend school every day but sit disinterested and bored at the back of classrooms could logically be taken into care because they are not receiving education 'suitable to their age, ability and aptitude'. Social workers find that a particular school may have more truants than others, and they resent having to cope with the failure of that school. In any event, does it necessarily make sense to take truants away from their homes and families? Sometimes, of course, parents may force their children to stay off school, and then perhaps care is the

right – if last – resort, but this is not usually the case. It was not in Angie's case.

At the time of writing this, a government working party has just issued a *Review of Child Care Law* with 223 recommendations for legal reform. It does not deal with 'criminal' care orders, but proposals were made to end the ruling whereby non-attendance at school could automatically end in care. In future the social services would have to show that 'lack of education is harming the child's development to such an extent that compulsory care is the most effective means of promoting the child's welfare'.

Only the social services would be able to initiate these proceedings – the education authority's powers would be limited to seeking a 'supervision order' which does not remove the young person from home. The earliest date these reforms could become law is 1988. They are long overdue.

Being in care

Perhaps the greatest irony is that there is very little evidence to show that young people like Angie receive suitable education once they are in care. Many truants are placed in 'Community Homes with Education on the Premises', particularly if they run away a lot. In 1980 a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education criticised the standard of education in these homes. They found that there were

'few attempts to encourage personal writing . . . few examples of well-planned Maths courses . . . no systematic attempt to initiate discussion about social issues, life skills, or personal responsibility in the social context'.

So much for Angie's love of Maths. Recent studies of young people in care show that they do not do well in their studies. As the University of Bristol put it in evidence to a Parliamentary committee:

'there is clear evidence that to be in care is an educational hazard over and above the disadvantages which children in care are likely to suffer from their home circumstances'.

So putting children into care because of truancy doesn't seem to solve their educational problems.

And, unlike schoolchildren, there is no automatic release from care at 16. The statistics show that a substantial proportion of those in care for failing to receive education are still in care after 16, and stay in care till they are 18.

At the end of the film Angie is placed in a 'secure unit'. This is a euphemism for a lock-up within the care system. A few years ago young people could be locked up on the say-so of social services, with no access to a court hearing. These days, though Field is right in saying that locking Angie up is his decision, the matter would have to go to court within 72 hours. Unfortunately it now looks as though many courts are simply rubber-stamping social workers' requests for a 'restriction of liberty order'.

The most horrifying image of the film is the final one – Angie having to bath in front of secure unit staff and being strip searched. Humiliating invasions of privacy like this do occur in care. Young people complain of bathrooms and toilets without locks, or even doors, of strip searches, and of having to wear nightclothes at all times to prevent them running away. At the Children's Legal Centre, where I work, we recently heard of two cases where girls had been forcibly stripped by male members of staff. One had her bra cut off. The other was eventually prosecuted for assaulting the male staff member because she broke his glasses and clawed his face in the struggle: she got six months youth custody; nothing happened to him. In the face of these cases the end of *Rhino* is an understatement.

What should have happened

I found watching *Rhino* an intensely frustrating experience. This is because I know that stories like Angie's need never happen. Although there are plenty of Angies around the country, there are also laws that are intended to protect people like her, and professionals who are alert to the problems and are trying to solve them.

To begin with, Angie was not attending school because she

found it boring and irrelevant. It would be true to say that many children feel the same way. Whilst there are good schools and good teachers, for many children school is as useless as Angie finds it. The fault lies with the education service as a whole, not with the children. So, in a way, Angie ends up being punished for the failures of her school.

Angie preferred to look after Charley rather than go to school. Already there is a law which says that social services must try to prevent children being taken into care by 'giving assistance in kind or, in exceptional circumstances, in cash'. So the social services ought to have got Charley the full-time day care Angie wanted. If Angie had had a good lawyer this would have been used to stop the care order.

If Angie did have the bad luck to arrive in care, she need not have gone to the Fish Street Assessment Centre. True, social workers like to 'assess' young people coming into care, but more progressive councils allow some children to live at home while assessment is carried out. What is more, social services are legally bound to find out the 'wishes and feelings' of all young people in care about any decision being taken concerning them. At 15 Angie was old enough to be involved in deciding where she was going to be placed.

Angie certainly never should have been locked up. There were better alternatives, and letting her live at home was the most obvious. The legal grounds for locking up young people in Angie's situation are that they are likely to run away, and this would not apply if she were at home.

Finally, the search at the end of the play would not have occurred in some lock-ups. There are guidelines in force in some lock-ups that any searches are carried out in a humane way, and that children are not required to stand naked in front of others.

Working for change

As I said at the beginning, what happens to Angie is a common occurrence. And it might be said that it is all very well discussing what should have happened, but Angie and those like her still end up the same way. This is true. The

education system and the social services fail some children, and the children are being made to pay for this failure.

Something is needed to ensure that the laws to protect young people are kept, and changed if they are not adequate. The Children's Legal Centre is one organisation which helps people like Angie and tries to improve the law. If a child is already in care, there is the National Association of Young People in Care which is run by young people themselves, and includes the group 'Black and In Care'. And as well as laws, attitudes to young people in care need to be changed, and this is why films like *Rhino* get written. We all need to know what can happen to young people like Angie, and to work for changes in the system of putting young people in care.

Rachel Hodgkin
February 1986

Useful addresses

The Children's Legal Centre
20 Compton Terrace
London N1 2UN
01 359 6251

National Association for Young People in Care (NAYPIC)
2nd Floor
Wool Exchange
Bradford, W. Yorkshire
0274 728484

Advisory Centre for Education
18 Victoria Park Square
London E2 9PB
01 980 4596

Rhino was first transmitted on ITV in Britain on 8 July 1983. Given below are the credits and cast for this Central Independent Television production.

Credits

Production Manager	Guy Travers
1st Assistant Director	Chris Rose
Location Manager	Joanna Gollins
Production Assistant	Monica Rogers
2nd Assistant Directors	Monica Hyde, Chris Thompson
Continuity	Mary Holdsworth
Camera Assistants	Jeremy Gee, Ian Owles, James Ainslie
Sound Assistants	Tony Bell, Clive Osborne
Grip	Peter Hall
Gaffer	Ronnie Rampton
Dubbing Editor	Charles Ware
Assistant Editors	Budge Tremlett, Clive Gardner
Wardrobe	Daryl Bristow
Make-up	Mary Hillman
Property Master	Bob Hedges
Accounts Assistant	Joan Murphy
Assistant Art Director	Celia Barnett
Costumes	Monica Howe
Production Executive	Sue Wall
Casting Director	Marylyn Johnson
Sound Recordist	Judi Freeman
Dubbing Mixer	Peter Maxwell
Music composed and arranged by	Simon Wallace
Editor	Mick Audsley
Art Director	Jamie Leonard
Photographed by	Chris Menges
Associate Producer	Patrick Cassavetti
Written by	David Leland
Producer	Margaret Matheson
Directed by	Jane Howell

Cast

Angie <i>Angie's family</i>	Deltha McLeod
Charley	Andrew Partridge
Gary	Michael Buffong
Father	Alfred Fagon
School	
Phil	Penny Fairbrace
Tony	Darren Clarke
Mr Bartlett	James Warrior
Headmaster	Peter Halliday
Sportsmaster	Paul Kember
Caretaker	Arthur Nightingale
Brian Jellis (EWO)	Derek Fuke
<i>Nursery school</i>	
Teachers	Heather Page, Judy Riley
<i>Social services office</i>	
Joyce Barker	Victoria Burton
Barry Clarke	Paul McDowell
Margaret	Susan Uebel
Tina	Georgina Kean
Gateman	Alec Wallis
<i>Court</i>	
Magistrate	Rhoda Lewis
<i>Assessment Centre</i>	
Nicky	Liza Barker
Val	Sally Ann Eaton
Radstock (key worker)	Barry McCarthy
Sue Godard	Su Elliott
Principal	Roland Oliver
George	John Ludlow
<i>Children's Home</i>	
Mrs Western	Marjorie Sudell
Miss Tandy	Jayn Tandy
<i>Secure Unit</i>	
Care Assistants	Kate Williams, Miranda Forbes
Supermarket saleswoman	Judith Anthony
Arresting Policeman	David Beckett

Note: The text which follows differs from the broadcast film in a number of minor ways, listed in the appendix.

Rhino

Part One

1 Exterior. A school in Berkhamstead. Day. 1

Documentary news film. Pathe Library. Opening day at a school in Berkhamstead. 1949.

Caption: Princess Margaret's words to schoolchildren.

PRINCESS MARGARET

Today I want to remind you that it is in the schools of Great Britain that boys and girls like you are learning to live in friendship with your neighbours, to respect the law, and to trust in God, the attributes which all combine to give English people that courage and sense of fair play for which they are known throughout the world. Now, more than ever before, Britain and the Dominions and colonies of the Commonwealth which she founded need men and women of courage and character to continue to keep them safe and strong against their enemies.

2 Exterior. Street in south London. Day. 2

8.45 a.m. A busy high street with heavy through traffic. Five assorted SKINHEADS – 12 to 15 year olds – including a BLACK YOUTH in a B.M. bomber jacket, cut through rush hour traffic moving like sprinters down the high street.