

The People's Republic of Neverland

The Child versus the State

Robb Johnson

There once was a time when teachers and communities were able to exercise democratic control over their schools. Now that power has been taken away, both centralised and privatised, under the guise of "reform." There is a forgotten history of the time before reform, and within it a bright horizon is visible, reachable only if educators and society at large can learn the lessons of the past.

Robb Johnson entered the classroom as a new teacher in the 1980s, and has spent a lifetime alongside his pupils encouraging both creativity and a healthy distrust of authority. This book is both memoir and polemic, a celebration of children's innate desire to learn, share, cooperate, and play, as well as a critique of bureaucratic interference and hobby-horse politicians.

In *The People's Republic of Neverland*, Robb Johnson details how we ended up with the contemporary mass education systems and explains why they continually fail to give our children what they need. Combining practical experience as a teacher with detailed pedagogical knowledge, and a characteristic playful style, Johnson is both court chronicler and jester, imparting information and creatively admonishing the self-important figureheads of the reform agenda.

This book considers how schools and education relate to the wider society in which they are located and how they relate to the particular needs and abilities of the people who experience them. It shows that schools and education are contested spaces that need to be reclaimed from the state and turned into places where people can grow, not up, not old, but as individuals. It offers alternative ways of running classrooms, schools, and perhaps even society.

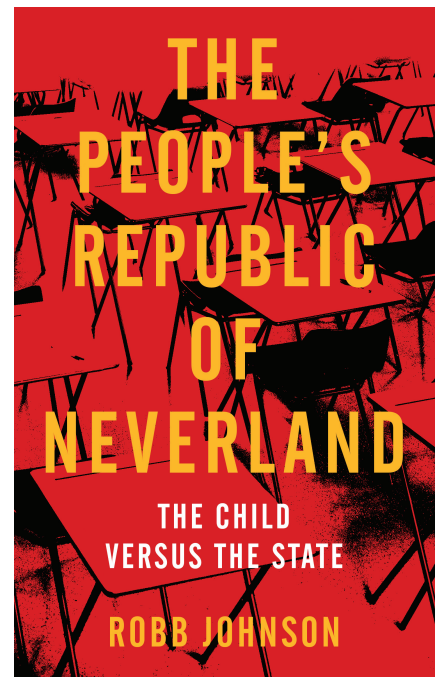
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robb Johnson was born in 1955, studied English lit at Sussex University, trained as a teacher, and then did an MA in English literature at Manchester University. He has worked as a classroom teacher by day and a songwriter by night since 1980. As a songwriter, he has received widespread critical acclaim. Robb has written songbooks; edited a book of stories, *Journeys Down Denbigh Road*, for use with young children in school assemblies; edited *A Navigator's Tale*, a book collecting his father's World War II memoir and poetry; and contributed regularly to the music magazine *RNR*.

ACCOLADES

"I have rarely seen a manuscript that is so embedded in what education is for and then direct the reader to how to pursue the goals, in practice and at all levels of school infrastructure so that the way schools are structured adds to the goodness of society."

—Marcelo Staricoff, author of *Start Thinking*, fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching, and former headteacher



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