

FORTUNATELY, THIS WON'T HAPPEN

Recently I had a nightmare. I was in an alien society where children with red hair were considered to be different to all other children. Special Red-Head Schools had been set up so all these children could receive an appropriate education.

The children travelled miles each day to the few Red-Head Schools and only associated with other red-headed children. They did not have any non-redhead children as friends. At the special school for "Reds" (as they had become known) the children received a different curriculum as it was well known that these children could not cope with the normal classroom demands. All the teachers were considered expert in teaching the Reds and some had done advanced training in coping with red-headed children. This meant that others in the society were uncertain how to relate to Reds as it was generally believed that you had to have special skills.

As the Reds did not mix with other children, they did not know what was appropriate behaviour. They just copied other Reds. This meant their behaviour became very different to non-Red children and they couldn't mix easily in society although the teachers tried hard to teach them non-Red ways of behaving.

Over time it had been accepted that all Reds were not the same. Some had lighter shades of red hair and it was felt that they required a different form of education to the pure Red Schools. Special centres were set up in regular schools where these Light-Reds were sent and they received a different curriculum again. As they were grouped together in these Light-Red Centres other children learned to distinguish the subtle shades of redness. Even though they were in the midst of non-Red children, these Light-Reds still did not belong and the other children would not play with them. They were Reds, after all.

While the parents of the Reds and Light-Reds had been grateful for the special schools for many decades, some had begun to question this. They wanted their children to go to the regular school with some help to get established. The head of education would have no part of this and put every barrier in the way of Reds going to regular school. He said it was clear that these parents had been stirred up by radicals who wanted to overturn the system.

I woke up in a sweat with the vivid recall that in the dream the Minister had just said these children must go to the Red School as he knew what was best. Police were tearing the children from their mother's arms and forcing them onto the Red school bus.

I'm glad it was just a dream. It couldn't happen in reality.

R. Jackson. Letter to the Editor, The Australian, 22nd May 1995, page 8.