



World Religions in Education - Shap Journal 1999

Can I Teach Your Religion?

Editorial - Riadh El- Droubie

Last year, the Shap Working Party lost one of its most enthusiastic and committed members with the death of Riadh El-Droubie. Apart from his significant contribution to the work of Shap, Riadh latterly designed and published the Shap Mailing. As the Journal's editor, I spent many hours with him compiling the previous three editions and I remember with great warmth his generosity and thoughtfulness both as a friend and as a colleague. It is the wish of the Working Party that the 1999 Shap Award be dedicated to his memory. Alan Brown has written his obituary.

OBITUARY

Riadh Abdul Wahed Hasan El-Droubie

Riadh El-Droubie was taken very ill and died just as the Shap Mailing was being produced in 1998. He had been a member of the Shap group organising the dates for the Calendar, and of course, he was its printer. This obituary appeared in the British Journal of Religious Education Volume 21:3 Summer 1999 and is reproduced here with the permission of the Editor.

There are people who can stand up for what they believe, yet are inclusive of those with different faiths. Their warmth is all embracing; in the midst of so many different opinions, and beliefs, they provide unity rather than division. What matters most to them is the humanity of the person. Riadh El-Droubie was such a person. Born in Baghdad, he had lived in Britain, apart from spells working abroad in Germany and Saudi Arabia, since 1957. He acquired British citizenship in 1982 but never lost his Arab and Islamic perspective on world events.

His early publications under the 'Minaret House' title may now seem dated as we approach the millennium, but when they were written they were virtually the only resources for schools about Islam to be written by a Muslim. Even in the 1990's requests continued to arrive for his booklets. Equally familiar to teachers of R.E. was his contribution to the Ward Lock series on 'Living Religions' in the 1970's.

Riadh was a founder member of the Shap Working Party in 1969 and in more recent years he moved to Croydon to set up his own business as a printer and translator. In this capacity he printed the Shap Calendar and Journal and while he didn't always agree with some of the articles



(particularly if they were about Islam or the much fought over city of Jerusalem), he was not afraid of dialogue and compromise and they were always printed in the end.

Shap produced a book of Festivals published by Longmans, recently re-edited, brought up to date and published by RMEP. Riadh wrote the chapter on Muslim Festivals in the original book and was one of the editorial team that produced the 1998 version. It was to be his last published material.

He was a constant supporter of all initiatives that sought to produce a deeper understanding of religion. He acted as consultant to a number of R.E. publications, including the Warwick R.E. Project's book 'Muslims' by Carrie Mercier (Heinemann 1996), and wrote 'My Muslim Life' in the series edited by Alison Seaman and published by Wayland in 1997.

In his later years he travelled to various European conferences on R.E. notably Finland and Sweden. He was internationally known and was an invaluable member of the European-wide project looking at the way Islam was presented in textbooks and funded by the Islamic Academy in Cologne.

In these activities, as in all things, his was the voice of calm and discretion and his contacts with his brother and sister Muslims were so helpful.

He printed the R.E. and Special Educational Needs Journal 'Respect' edited by my wife and myself and his wedding gift to us was our marriage Order of Service and invitation cards - but typically he didn't come.

The Gulf War was a taxing time for him with family remaining in Baghdad. His present and his future lay in Britain but his heart reached out to his family in Baghdad. To talk with him at that time was to lay bare the paradox of religion, patriotism and politics. He recognised the tyrant and the oppressor but was wary of American domination of the Arab world. For Riadh the conflict was not about Saddam Hussain but global influence and interference.

As a Muslim he was deeply committed to his faith but in the words of a mutual friend, " he drew people into the warmth of Islam." The parody of Islam in the press and T.V. hurt him deeply and the last thirty years of his life was dedicated to improving relations between Muslims and others. One of Riadh's familiar phrases was 'I think we should have a group', and while Riadh's name may not have been on everyone's lips, all of us in education should pay tribute to his work and the philosophy which underpinned this.

The Shap working party on World Religions in Education



To me he was a great friend, someone whom I trusted, loved and liked enormously. I knew he was ill, but I was not aware of the gravity of the situation. We had travelled abroad together on a number of occasions but even within the bonds of friendship he rarely talked about himself. That was Riadh - never self-promoting or self-advancing - a humble man with talents we could all do well to possess. His memory will live on not only through his own works but because he established firm foundations upon which others could build. Most of all, his patience, humour and personality touched the lives of those who knew him.

He had warmth and a generous heart; full of love and concern for humanity. I know I do not only speak for myself when I say I shall miss him.

Alan **Brown**

Secretary to The Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education