

# The Freethinker

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CERTAINLY THE WEATHER favoured us. Blue skies and sunshine over the lovely Surrey woods and hills, far from London's madding crowd, the serene gardens, all offered an ideal place to inwardly digest what learned men have said. And there was much questioning — for "he that questioneth shall learn much" — and "jest with earnest". Near half the company assembled at the house during Friday afternoon and sat down to the evening meal without the bus party which was belated. All's well that ends well; they arrived nearly an hour behind time; what mattered a dent on the bus roof and a stricken tree.

Lady Barbara Wootton opened the conference with a greeting expressing the satisfaction at being able to be with us on this occasion and wishing us a successful gathering. The National Secular Society President, Mr. F. A. Ridley, followed welcoming the assembly and the presence of an international Freethought body in a country so mixed-up as to possess an hereditary monarchy and an established Church in a democratic setting, and South Place Ethical Society Secretary, Mr. J. Hutton Hynd, joined in the greetings and good wishes. He lamented, however, the absence of E. J. Fairhall, so long their devoted Treasurer and a member of the World Union British Committee, whose recent death had been such a loss to both organisations. To these words of welcome, M. Jean Cotereau, Secretary of the French Federation, replied, thanking the earlier speakers for their good wishes. He regretted that ill-health prevented Mlle Pardon from attending the conference; she had been hon. secretary of the World Union since 1925, and this was the first reunion which she had missed. In these days of clerical resurgence, Freethought was a pillar that stood firm, a rallying point for intellectual progress; by clerical he did not mean one Church only, he himself was shortly to go to Tunis where he would meet the power of Islam. Mr. A. T. Kovoov, President of the Rationalist Association of Ceylon responded for the non-Europeans.

## O. Lutaud

The first session on Saturday was devoted to a brief, but pregnant period of history in England and in France, 1633 - 1666. M. Lutaud of the Sorbonne, an authority on Milton and the Levellers, took Laud's enthronement as Archbishop and his Thorough Discipline as his starting point and the publication of Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, which he considered a defeat for Rationalism, as his terminal. Freethought, separating Creed from Science, appeared in the Church; men such as Taylor approved of Reason: the Cambridge Platonists demanded methodical thought; Descartes rejected clerical limitations; Gassendi, although an ecclesiastic, was a materialist like Hobbes, interested in Epicurus and the atomic theories of Lucretius and emphasising the need for experimental research. For him, in fact, once God has established the rules of existence he was out of a job. A most striking figure was Cyrano de Bergerac, whose astounding exploits provided the material

for Rostand's play. He was a real Freethinker who in comic guise presented quite modern scientific theories as well as political doctrines, combined with a vigorous attack on clerical authority. In England appeared John Hall's remarkable *Advancement of Learning*, and then came Gerard Winstanley and the Levellers. With these the lower classes were making themselves heard. Lastly the learned speaker made an interesting, if surprising, comparison between Milton and Molière, discussing in particular the former's *Areopagitica* and the latter's *Tartuffe*. This was a most impressive beginning to our talks. M. Lutaud's command of English, his vigour in expression, his striking and witty analogies, e.g. between Cromwell and de Gaulle, all made his address a memorable one.

## P. Sargant Florence

Comparisons are, we know, odorous. In very different style Professor P. Sargant Florence gave us something quite as good and right up-to-date, based on his own experiences in countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Jamaica etc. His subject was, "Religious Obstacles to the Development of Higher Standards of Living in Backward Countries". Pointing out that, if the income per head of the population in USA is taken as 100, that in UK is 45, in Egypt is 5 and in Pakistan is 2½, he emphasised that the position was worsening. It could be improved in three ways, by a more equal distribution of wealth among countries; by reducing the populations; by increasing the total income by higher productivity. Attempts to limit population run into religious barriers, not only from Roman Catholics, but generally from the widespread religions. But this is not the only hindrance that religions bring. There is the waste of physical capacity for work, e.g. Ramadan, the fast when meals are only eaten in the hours of darkness, and everyone, especially the poor, is more or less incapacitated for steady labour. Purdah prevents a significant number of women from productive work. Buddhist monasteries withdraw a large proportion of men from full labour, Religious custom and prejudice lead often to waste of natural wealth and capital, e.g. the building of cathedrals, the sacred cows of India etc. Religion can also give rise to a surprising waste of managerial ability and potential education, e.g. universities for religion only; schools in which all that is learnt is to repeat the Koran, and religious obsessions are often a hindrance. As the increase of population is greatest in the illiterate countries, it is estimated that the world's illiterates have increased by 50 million in the past 30 years. Religion tends to discourage the enquiring mind, so necessary for progress today. The immense improvements in medicine are making the problem of the excessive birth-rate even more urgent. Wealth in the poor countries is even more unequally distributed than elsewhere. The question arises whether it is wise to pour financial aid into these backward countries which are dominated by obstructive religious institutions and blinded by religious prejudices. For

## World Union of Freethinkers

Conference at Beatrice Webb House, Dorking, Surrey.

September 8th — 10th, 1961

example, Jordan, thanks to foreign aid, imports ten times as much as she exports; and in most of these countries the wealth goes into the pockets of the few; the masses become poorer and poorer. The Professor had expressed his desire to arouse a discussion; and he certainly succeeded. Some ten members took part in it, and many more were frustrated by a call to the dining-room which could not be heeded.

#### **Fenner Brockway**

Saturday afternoon was beautiful and the President led a party to the top of a mountain to be shown all the kingdoms of the world and be tempted to drink tea. Whence they hurried back to meet Mr. Fenner Brockway bearing the "Challenge of Africa", the gauntlet from the "dark continent", now lit up with no steady light, but flashes of the storm. Here was the man who had been there, had met the leaders of those seeking liberation and been the target of those who would hold to what they had; the man nevertheless ready to give justice where justice is due, to admire the efforts of Mr. Macleod and recognise the good done by the missions in recent days, even if this good was belated. The Challenge is roughly this. In the last century the European powers have descended on Africa like a band of thieves, divided the land between them, developed it, bringing in exchange missions, motor-cars and medicine. Today the Africans, black, brown or brunette. Negro Hamite or Semite, are roundly declaring that they have learned their lessons and can rule themselves and develop their lands without the white man. They challenge the latter to prove his worth and the worth of all his professions. Where there is no settler element in the country, e.g. in Ghana, the problem is fairly simple. Where there is a strong settler party, perhaps of two or three generations, with nowhere else to go, e.g. Algeria, South Africa, the solution is difficult to find, and being sought in blood and violence, under circumstances in which the moderate men are very unhappy, whether white or black. Oil, copper, gold and diamonds would seem to bring out the worst in mankind. As in the earlier discourses, the interest aroused was lively and Mr. Brockway was saved only by the dinner bell.

#### **A. T. Kovoov**

In the evening Mr. A. T. Kovoov, whom we were fortunate to have with us, told us how Europe knew little of Ceylon, apart from its tea, till the River Kwai film, the assassination of Dr. Bandaranaike and the appearance of his widow as the first woman Prime Minister drew attention to the country. It was also remarkable in having the only university in all the world devoted to the study of Astrology. The Minister of Cultural Affairs had decided to establish two Universities for Buddhists, one for Hindus and one for Muslims; for Ceylon has a mixed population, mostly Sinhalese, then Tamils of long establishment, (amongst the most primitive of aboriginal tribes), Burgers, Tamils of recent arrival, Arabs, primitive Veddahs (of mixed Asiatic and European descent) as well as some British. The prosperity of the island is admittedly due to the British, and indigenous culture had been partly replaced by mission school culture. Mr. Bandaranaike had risen to power by promising the Buddhists to make Sinhalese the official language instead of English and to give advantages to Buddhism; this had driven the non-Sinhalese out of the government and had led to bloody riots violently suppressed. Rationalism was endeavouring to cope with religious pressure and to strive with the common credulity.

#### **M Homès**

Saturday gave us, not only variety, but much to think over. Lutaud, the eloquent, erudite and witty French professor; Sargent Florence equally informative, but informal, chatty and confidential with an urgent message: Brockway,

the experienced public orator speaking on a subject near his heart and equally urgent. Sunday was just as good. Professor Homès, of the Free University of Brussels, was the professor of science dealing with a subject which he has at his fingers' ends, and a subject of which he has practical knowledge. In this case it was the problem of Hunger in a world where the population is increasing not as Malthus thought, in geometric progression, but faster and faster, so that where a century ago 1280 million people dwelt, more than double that number have to be fed today. On the other hand the increase in food production has not been in Arithmetical progression, but irregular and much below the population increase. Hence the number of underfed goes up by leaps and bounds. De Castro of FAO holds that a natural reduction in human reproduction will inevitably bring food requirements to an adequate level. This, at the cost possibly of frightful suffering, may be the case in the long run; what is wanted is some more immediate solution. We can see with some certainty for perhaps twenty years ahead. The introduction of some effective form of birth control will take forty years or more to equate human increase with food increase at present rates. Hence the problem, the main problem of our times, since in its resolution lies the answer to other urgent problems such as nationalism, is the raising of food production to a really adequate level. A Western cynic has written "when Malthus wrote his conclusions he might have been correct, but since the end of the 18th century the earth can feed its numbers". This statement could be made because there had been no famine in civilised countries. Western peoples do not know what hunger means. Hunger is the great cause of death in the world. More than war, than Auschwitz, hunger killed Jews during the last war; in the Russian revolution 20 millions died of hunger. Scientists do not yet know how to treat people dying of hunger, and the well-fed must bear in mind that the underfed countries are the principal food producers. When they gain political independence, will they remain hungry? The hope for the future lies in a rapid increase in food production, and this is possible, if the nations will wholeheartedly co-operate. To manufacture synthetic, tabloid meals is not feasible on a large scale. Plant growth offers the sole hope; and man generally is very backward in plant cultivation and in cattle feeding. Aid in money or in kind is no use without aid in brains; and aid is useless unless accepted in the right spirit. Education must be the great instrument; and the best brains must be applied to the practical application of scientific knowledge to this problem, for as FAO declares "Nothing will relieve the misery of the underfed countries till the food problem is resolved".

The addresses of Professor Homès and Professor Sargent Florence made a deep impression on the audience and the following resolution was passed: "That this conference expresses its concern at the situation produced by the rapid increase of the population of the world and the difficulty in feeding it. It notes with deep interest the points raised by Professors Sargent Florence and Homès at this conference and calls on all freethought and allied organisations to study these problems urgently with a view to making a distinctive contribution to the forthcoming campaign of FAO for freedom from Hunger."

#### **Maurice Burton**

Next we heard Dr. Maurice Burton on "The Elusive Monster of Loch Ness", a study in human self-deception, and a demonstration of scientific detection. This was very much a matter for Freethinkers: the degree to which man can deceive himself and humbug others. Enthusiastic, sincere, but unscientific individuals can make in perfect good

faith, claims which cannot bear scientific scrutiny. For twenty-seven years Dr. Burton thought there might be "something" in Loch Ness; it was the film on Panorama which finally disillusioned him. Of three sets of recent photographs and drawings, all supposed to show the "monster", one was demonstrably of a motor-boat, one was a fake; and some drawings were certainly of Red deer. Certainly people see humps and things which stick up. Such things have been observed in lakes on many parts of the world for many centuries. Dr. Burton, illustrating his explanations with illuminating blackboard sketches took us step by step through his painstaking investigations. It was a paper by a Norwegian lady which revealed to him the probable cause of these phenomena. Similar "monsters" had been reported in Norwegian lakes and had been shown to be due to marsh gas rising under the matted vegetable matter, glued together by pine-needle gum. This produced all the typical occurrences, a flurry on the surface of the water, the apparition of humps, waterlogged branches would be thrust up into the air looking like long necks; then the whole would disappear, sometimes to reappear repeatedly. Dr. Burton had reproduced similar

effects under laboratory conditions. So it was quite possible for a water bailiff to have seen the "monster" fourteen times. Humps such as this were not always what was seen, Lively imaginations, unregulated by scientific observation, could turn passing otters into "monsters" as well as motorboats, Red deer and what-you-will. And the readiness of the public to believe the most fantastic stories did the rest. We could understand why there are so many religious people.

All these addresses aroused keen interest, which was expressed in the questions and discussions which ensued in each case. The conference was brought to an end by Heer J. G. Rausch (Utrecht) speaking for the General Committee, and Mr. G. Kirk of Leicester Secular Society speaking for the English societies. Besides the usual expressions of satisfaction and votes of thanks, each had something to add of value in well-chosen benedictory words. After that we separated, to travel by car, some by train and the largest number by coach, which this time went swiftly and punctually to its Victorian destination. And the sun was shining from blue skies, and the robins were singing as we left.

## Speech of Welcome

At the International Freethought Conference

By F. A. RIDLEY

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. It is with profound pleasure that I rise and welcome the visitors to this weekend Conference and in particular, those from abroad. I do this not only on my own behalf, but on that of the National Secular Society, affiliated to the World Union of Freethinkers whose present distinguished President, Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner, is the grandson of our own illustrious Founder, Charles Bradlaugh, equally renowned in his own day as a pioneer of political Democracy and of Atheism and Secularism. Indeed, it gives me particular pleasure to welcome this weekend Conference, the first (I think) to be held on English soil since 1938, and so soon to be followed by the centenary (1866-1966) of the National Secular Society itself. I must repeat that I do this not only (though I do so most sincerely) in a personal capacity, but as the democratically-elected (if unworthy) successor of the great Presidents of the past — Charles Bradlaugh, the great orator, G. W. Foote, the great writer, and Chapman Cohen, the great philosopher of our movement.

The precise subjects to be discussed at this Conference by our distinguished lecturers, involve problems widely remote from each other; most of them are, no doubt, of a character predominantly technical, upon which it would be surely presumptuous for a layman — a polite synonym for an ignoramus—to expatiate here. Upon only two of the several subjects to be discussed here, can I myself speak with any approach to real knowledge; the subject, or part of it, of the distinguished representative of the Sorbonne, M. O. Lutaud, i.e. the English Freethinkers of the 17th century is one with which I am not entirely unfamiliar, for it is in the major intellectual ferment provoked by the great English Revolution of the 17th century that both political democracy and freethought in the sphere of religion, took their initial rise in this country. Whilst in our own times, one of the major events of our time, the Challenge of Africa is to be commented upon by my friend and former colleague in another capacity, Fenner Brockway, than whom there is certainly no one more qualified in this, or indeed in any other country outside Africa, to speak. Fenner Brockway has devoted his life to the great task of human, political and social emancipation, and it

is one of my own proudest memories to have been at one time associated with him in this mighty task. The recent emergence of Africa, of the former Dark Continent, is certainly one of the most important, as well as spectacular events, not only of our time, but in the whole panorama of world history. I am also proud to have known such African leaders as the late George Padmore, Jomo Kenyatta, and other pioneers of African emancipation, and to have myself, like Fenner Brockway, to have been invited as a fraternal delegate to participate personally in the epoch-making deliberations of the first All-African Peoples Conference in Accra. No doubt also, our other lecturers have themes of a comparable significance; it is alas, only I who lack the requisite knowledge to discuss them.

The occasion of this Conference finds British society and the British State in an extremely anomalous situation and one, it can be relevantly added, that was quite unknown to the pioneers of our movement. For then, England stood as the self-confessed metropolis and master of a world-wide Empire, ruled and concurrently exploited by a system of unqualified imperialism and of unrestricted Colonial domination. What more natural was it than for the English monarchy and ruling class, the historic beneficiaries of "the Empire upon which the sun never set", to establish and to maintain for centuries out of their world-wide loot, a State Church through the "spiritual" agency of which they could offer thanks to God who had so marvellously favoured the English in all their temporal undertakings? So much so, in fact, that it was sometimes even supposed that the creator of the Universe was himself an Englishman. Today however, all this belongs to the past; the sun of history is setting over both the English Empire and the English God. In their place, we now have a multi-racial, multi-religious Commonwealth, whose component fractions follow many Gods — or none. What then could be more anomalous, even more utterly absurd, than the present continuance, in defiance of all logic and of all current history, of a State Church, privileged in law, and to which the British Monarch, who is also the Head of the multi-racial Commonwealth, is still compelled by law to

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

**There appears to be no end to the brilliant ideas** our clergy have of making a little ready cash in side lines, so to speak. One of the latest precious and pious examples is that initiated by the Rev. C. Weller of Ilford (*Evening Standard* September 9th, 1961) — for a fee of £1 a couple married in his church can have a tape-recording of the ceremony; and one can see that there are endless possibilities in the idea. Baptising children — yells and all — is one, and it will bring a feeling of sheer nostalgia fifty years hence. In addition, what better present can one imagine than a word of encouragement from the vicar on a tape for backsliders and rock 'n' roll addicts?

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**The same journal most pathetically calls** attention to the way Methodist ministers are leaving the Church. What would dear old John Wesley think if he were alive today and see his 60 years of hard work evangelising England thus crumbling into dust? It is claimed that many Methodist parsons are joining the Church of England, but is not that Church suffering in exactly the same way? No longer can it be said that "younger sons" want to join the Church. They prefer (and rightly) a job with good money than serving Jesus on plain bread and marg. And what about apathy? That particular corrosion has hit *all* Churches.

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**The "Daily Express" appears on occasions to love** giving us a "Quote" even from disgruntled parsons. For example, here is one from the Rev. A. Dunstan of St. Mary's Church, Gravesend — "There is nothing more dispirited than feeble half-hearted 'Amen's'"; and to this we heartily add our own strong and fervent "Amen". But why is "Amen" so badly rendered? Is it because the word sounds funny in church when uttered *reverently*? In any case "Amen" is merely a corruption of the Egyptian God's name Ammon, and in these days of comparative religion even Christians know it.

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**Nobody had greater contempt for the inanities** of Spiritualism than George Bernard Shaw and, when alive, he roundly told Hannen Swaffer so. Now that he is dead, he also joins the throng of famous men who have told Mr. Swaffer how mistaken they are. Five years after his death appeared a message from GBS in *The People* through Mr. Swaffer and a medium, Lillian Bailey — "the same violent ebullient GBS". In fact, we were assured that Shaw "is giving to many people on our side . . . the message of life eternal — in his own way . . ." That there are people who believe this kind of sheer nonsense is a lamentable fact. Credulity and humbug still actively flourish.

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**Mr. Swaffer may for all we know get into active touch** with Freethinkers like Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, Paine and many others. The great T. H. Huxley said of Spiritualism of his own day — "The only case of 'Spiritualism' I have had the opportunity of examining into for myself, was as gross an imposture as ever came under my notice . . . The only good that I can see in a demonstration of the truth of 'Spiritualism' is to furnish an additional argument against suicide. Better live a crossing-sweeper than die and be made to talk twaddle by a 'medium' hired at a guinea a seance". So now we are awaiting a spirit message from Huxley to say that he is no longer an Agnostic, that he believes not only in God Almighty, but is saved in Jesus, and is deliriously happy enjoying his eternal life.

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**We were most intrigued to note that a reader of *The Ottawa Citizen*** (August 15th, 1961) who can't find any

"facts" proving the existence of God (though he believes in him) was roundly told it can't be done; at least not like "an algebraic equation". You can't prove the existence of love, honour and justice in this way. What undoubtedly proves God is "Faith" — as if we didn't know. All you have to say is, "I know my Redeemer liveth", and the job is done. We present this astonishing proof for the existence of Almighty God to all who contemplate writing another Theistic work. It would save them a lot of trouble.

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**"These were the real gun fighters" said the *Daily Herald*** (31/8/61) and among the faces of Jesse James, Wyatt Earp and the rest, a stranger caught our eye. We have now added the name of John Wesley Hardin to our Western lore, along with the brief biographical details: "Texas parson's son. Killed his first man at 15. Added 26 more in next three years".

**SPEECH OF WELCOME** (*Concluded from page 307*) belong. It is an anomalous situation unknown to Charles Bradlaugh when he founded the National Secular Society a near century ago, but one which surely supplies an irresistible argument in favour of the immediate application in, and to, this country, of the fundamental Secularist principle of the total separation of Church and State; the basic principle for which the National Secular Society stands and from which it derives its name.

This Conference undoubtedly meets at an historic hour, not only in general contemporary history, but, and very particularly in the current annals of Freethought in its present actual and potential capacity as a genuinely world-wide movement. For, hitherto it has to be acknowledged that Freethought as a mass-movement, has (apart from isolated individuals and groups), been mainly confined to the white races and individuals of European origin, and that its intellectual arguments have been formulated mainly against the claims and dogmas of a single religion — Christianity, whether in its Catholic or Protestant forms. Today, however, the contemporary scientific and technological revolution which has so profoundly affected the course of contemporary life (both for good and, as any student of Dialectics would expect, for evil also) has assumed a literally world-wide character. In the wake of Industry comes Science and in the wake of Science arises these sequential ideas, Rationalism, Humanism and Secularism. In the years that lie ahead, Freethought will become a really world-wide movement. Our World Union of Freethinkers will become a World Union in fact, as well as (hitherto) in name. The other non-Christian religions also will soon have to face the attack. Perhaps Mr. President, before your tenure of office expires, you may preside over International Conferences, not only in Rome and Madrid, the present centres of Catholic intransigence, but also in Benares and Mecca. Perhaps eventually in Jerusalem, the Holy City of Jehovah himself! For the current course of world-history is as indubitably upon our side today as in pre-scientific ages it was equally against us.

Mr. President, our time is drawing on. I must conclude by both in my own name and in that of my own Society, wishing all success to this Conference and to all its participants of all races and all movements. I will only remark in conclusion — I trust without suspicion of Chauvinism — that England is a specially appropriate venue for this Conference. England, whence originated the Industrial Revolution which, two centuries ago, made Freethought a world-force for the first time in recorded history, and where the great Darwin first enunciated the theories of human evolution that guarantee its ultimate victory.

[We hope to print other speeches to the World Union of Freethinkers Conference later.—Ed.]

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.

London (Tower Hill).—Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.; Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S.. Thursday lunchtimes, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria Statue. (Platt Fields), Sundays, 3 p.m.: Messrs. G. H. MILLS and G. A. WOODCOCK.

Marble Arch N.S.S. (Marble Arch), Sundays, 12 noon: MESSRS. F. A. RIDLEY, D. H. TRIBE, C. H. CLEAVER and G. F. BOND.

Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. P. MURACCIOLE and H. A. TIMMINS

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

### INDOOR

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1.) Tuesday, October 3rd, 7.30 p.m.: ANTHONY BROOKE (former Rajah of Sarawak), "The Revolutionary Individual in the Cosmic Age".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate.) Sunday, October 1st, 6.30 p.m.: Concert, "The Gaskell Follies".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1.) Sunday, October 1st, 11 a.m.: Dr. HELEN ROSENAU, "Town Planning".

## Notes and News

WE AGAIN regretfully remind readers of the increased inland subscription rates shown at the head of this column, necessitated by postal increases on October 1st.

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TWO NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY members W. J. McIlroy, Hon. Secretary of Marble Arch Branch, and W. Miller, former Chairman of the Birmingham Branch, walked into the office together around noon on Monday, September 18th. They had sat down together in Trafalgar Square the previous day in the demonstration organised by the "Committee of 100"; they had been taken away to Deptford Police station together, been charged together, put in the same cell and fined £2 each at Tower Bridge magistrates court. Mr. McIlroy asks other NSS supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament to write to him at 140a Hornsey Lane, London, N.6.

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IN ITS LATEST (September) Bulletin, the National Council for Civil Liberties (to which the National Secular Society is affiliated) expresses its increasing concern at "tendencies to reduce the facilities for traditional methods of political expression". It instances Ministry of Works' refusal to permit the "Committee of 100" to book Trafalgar Square, or assemble at Speakers' Corner; a political party being prevented from holding open-air meetings on a site in

Islington where meetings have been held for nearly two years; a Trade Union branch which "cannot obtain permission to use the traditional site at Lincoln's Inn Fields because of possible obstruction" and the Anti-Apartheid Movement being "virtually prevented from holding any poster parades outside South Africa House, because of potential 'breaches of the peace'". Whatever our political opinions, we must view with apprehension these incursions into the rights of freedom of speech and assembly. And the NCCL deserves credit for the work it does in resisting them.

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IN A LETTER TO *The Guardian* (19/9/61) on "Is God Necessary?" (prompted by Sir Julian Huxley's *Observer* article criticised in our Views and Opinions last week) the Rev. O. L. Mathews of Stourbridge expressed the "main difference between science and religion as at present understood", as "the difference between 'Bodies' and 'Beings'". "Science studies bodies", he said (dropping his capitals). "Religion, without denying bodies, lays emphasis on beings, human or superhuman". Once having made this quite invalid distinction there is no holding Mr. Mathews. "It is worth remembering that morality is always a relationship between 'beings'" and "When we exclude or deny any concept of being, all 'responsibility' is undermined". Inevitably, too, that most puerile of questions. "Is Sir Julian Huxley only a lump of matter?"

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YET IT IS in our view, an indication of the deficiencies of Sir Julian Huxley's article (not of science) that the Rev. O. L. Mathews reached the same destination from the opposite direction. "If scientists and theologians could together begin to work on the concept of being as well as the concept of body or matter, then religion could be approached scientifically and science could become responsible". Both Mr. Mathews and Sir Julian are dualists.

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REVIEWING *The Humanist Frame*, the book from which Sir Julian Huxley's article was taken, Hugh Trevor-Roper said that: "With the generous credulity to which scientists are so prone, Sir Julian has swallowed whole the extraordinary, pretentious, anti-scientific mumbo-jumbo of a French priest, the late Fr. Teilhard de Chardin". This may be a little overstated, but it is unfortunately basically true in Sir Julian Huxley's case. We would only suggest that Professor Trevor-Roper should have said "to which some scientists are so prone . . ." After all, it was another scientist, Professor P. B. Medawar, FRS, who wrote that "devastating critique" (as Professor Trevor-Roper called it) of Teilhard's *The Phenomenon of Man*, and he probably spoke for most biologists when he did so. Professor Trevor-Roper called Medawar "Mr.", and seemed to think he was a philosopher.

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WE HAVE ONLY SPACE for a brief resumé of a cockeyed house in the Cotswolds described by a reporter of *The People* (3/9/61). John Steele and his wife have arranged a "spiritual divorce" (i.e. moved into separate bedrooms) because she has been told by an angel that she will "bear a son by an immaculate conception and that he was coming to stop the world from blowing its top". Mr. Steele seems to be spending his time — and money — on the treatment of ailments with "Black Box" equipment worth £1,500, Mrs. Steele being the "spiritual bride" of George Bernard Shaw, with whom she recently spent a month on holiday in Killarney. Perhaps if the Steeles looked up the meaning of immaculate conception they would start sleeping together again. That's if Shaw doesn't object of course.

# Catholic Action: The Pope's Propaganda Machine

By ADRIAN PIGOTT

## PART THREE

The habit of Roman Catholics writing to the letter columns of newspapers, or bombarding MPs at a given signal from their clerical leaders is very prevalent; this can be noticed during the visits to Britain of any famous person who is *persona non grata* with the Vatican. When Marshal Tito visited us in 1953, the papist Evelyn Waugh wrote a discordant and deplorable article in the *Sunday Express* describing the hero as "Our Guest of Dishonour". This habit of writing letters to legislators is generally "inspired" by the clergy. The American weekly magazine *Time*, recently reported an amusing episode which exposed the fact that many of the Roman Catholics who write indignant letters of protest know very little about the subject involved, but merely slavishly obey the promptings of their clerical directors. Over the recent discussions about awarding educational subsidies, senators were flooded with letters demanding more money for the Roman Catholic schools. Most of these letters, it was found, were written in almost identical wordings; and, in some cases the simpleton writers had actually enclosed the printed sheet which their Catholic Action bosses had sent to them to use as a model for framing their protest letters!

Readers of THE FREETHINKER will remember the recent enforced withdrawal of the British Transport poster about family planning. (The official reason given for this enormity was that the poster might offend certain religious people. But there is only one religious body which holds strong views on this subject, i.e. the Roman Catholic Church). It is safe to assume that our Roman Catholic clergy cracked their whips to the devout British members of Catholic Action who dutifully "did their stuff" and flooded the British Transport Commission with letters of protest—which resulted in the withdrawal of a beneficial poster, against the wishes of the 90% non-Romanists in Great Britain. This is a concrete example of the power of Catholic Action in practice. Energetic action taken by a mere 10% minority group can force their pernicious ideas upon an all too apathetic 90% of Britons.

Letters to the correspondence columns of our newspapers, when repeated over a period of years—and often with no contradictions being allowed—very naturally sink in to the minds of readers. This, of course, is the aim of propaganda. For example, the average Briton has read the many oft-repeated opinions (written by Roman Catholics), praising General Franco and saying how he "saved Spain from Bolshevism". In consequence, it is widely believed in Britain today that the last legally elected Spanish Government was a Communist one. The truth happens to be that of the 473 representatives elected in 1936, only 16 were Communists. (*The Times*, February 18th, 1936.) Yet so great is the force of clever Catholic Action propaganda (as purveyed repeatedly by our press and radio by British Papal devotees), that most of our younger generation possess entirely erroneous views about Spain and General Franco.

We had another example in 1958 on the death of Pius XII, when our press and radio (influenced by Catholic Action propaganda), came out with an avalanche of fulsome praise for a totally unmeritable man. Our newspapers vied with each other in showering compliments on a pontiff who had rendered many disservices to mankind. *The Star* came out with banner headlines "The World Mourns" — quite irrespective of the fact that Roman

Catholics comprise only one sixth of the human family, a high percentage of whom are illiterate nobodies in Latin America. Only one organisation in our apathetic and easy-going community took any active steps to expose these nonsensical extravagances. The National Secular Society, to its credit, arranged a successful meeting which crowded the Caxton Hall in London. The London press was notified and accommodation was reserved for reporters—but not one attended! Our editors appear to be unduly timid and are frightened about offending the 10% Romanists who, with characteristic aggressiveness, are enabled to impose their opinions on the British public.

Another device of the same mind-poisoning nature is the scribbling of the gossip-writers in the "Society columns" of newspapers. They frequently record a perfectly correct fact to the effect "that Lord Jones is shortly to marry Miss Robinson at Brompton Oratory". Care is taken to add the fact that Lord Jones is a Protestant and that Miss Robinson a Roman Catholic, and that any children will be brought up as Roman Catholics. This is a small matter, of course, but endless repetitions on this theme do have an effect over the course of years and they tend to create the disheartening impression that the Roman Catholics are gaining ground. Another dodge of Romanist gossip-writers is to record that "Lady Jenkins has just gone to Italy and her friends believe that she is receiving instructions prior to entering the Roman Catholic Church". There may be no foundation for this allegation, but it is just another astute bit of propaganda. The gossip-writers recently tried this gambit on ex-Queen Soraya of Persia, who was so annoyed at the falsity that the Vatican had to admit that there was no truth in the rumour.

I was in Malta when the traitor Cardinal Stepinac died, and all local newspapers came out with headlines depicting him in a most favourable light. (Not a word about his High Treason, of course!) The Archbishop of Malta even sent a telegram to the Pope expressing the deep sympathy of the Maltese people over "the grievous loss". Yet only 15 years previously the Italian friends of the Cardinal had been bombing and devastating Malta!

### Infiltration

The Roman Catholic Sir Tom O'Brien, gave the show away when he recently stated that "Infiltration into the whole life of a nation should be the aim of the Catholic laity". In Britain, this sort of thing can be effected by serving on committees where the Church's interests can be promoted. For example, on library selection committees, enthusiastic Roman Catholics are in a favourable position to assist their Church by suppressing anti-Vatican books and introducing pro-Vatican books. In my local Public Library, there are two indifferent books by the Papist Earl of Longford—but none whatever by more important authors such as Avro Manhattan and Paul Blanshard. Our Foreign Office (the most inefficient of our ministerial departments), is riddled with Roman Catholics.

Catholic Action has had some success in re-writing the history books used by the London County Council. Some of the nastier episodes in Papal history (such as the Spanish Inquisition, the burnings at Smithfield under "Bloody Mary" and the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve), have been suitably toned down or even omitted.

### Counter-Measures

Can we do anything about Catholic Action?

Unluckily, there seems to be very little that ordinary citizens can do owing to the cunning with which Catholic Action is conducted. Guy Fawkes was found under the Houses of Parliament in company with 36 barrels of gunpowder, some wood and some matches. The evidence against him was overwhelming; but the modern Papal methods of damaging a country are so subtle that nothing incriminating is involved.

No charges can be legally brought against those who conduct the "dirty work" of the Pope (i.e. the gossip-writers, the library committees who ban anti-Catholic books; the clubs with innocent-sounding names—but which are, in reality, Papal traps; the writers of letters to the press who disparage heroes like Marshal Tito, while praising General Franco who provided Hitler with submarine bases).

Perhaps the only thing which progressive citizens can do is to expend three-pence on a stamp, and write to complain to the editors who print pro-Vatican propaganda.

It is little enough I fear. However, as Confucius said in BC 500, "It is better to light a small candle, rather than to grumble about the darkness".

(Concluded)

## Points from New Books

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

In *The Bootleggers* (Hutchinson, 30s.) Kenneth Allsop not only gives us a wonderful picture of the days of Al Capone, but he also gives us a wonderful social analysis of the making of a Chicago gangster. He shows us how the gangster simply takes the American admiration of the go-getter and of unrestricted free-enterprise to its logical conclusion.

Readers of this paper will, I think, be particularly interested in the fact that so many Chicago gangsters were Irish and Sicilian immigrants who thought of themselves as deeply religious men. They didn't smoke, drink or swear; and they attended Mass on Sundays. Killers such as Hymie Weiss and Spike O'Donnell wore crucifixes round their necks and carried rosaries when their guns chopped down citizens with bullets.

Mr. Allsop quotes a contemporary article about Al Capone's wife which stated: "Mrs. Capone, a good looking Irish woman of Brooklyn birth, goes to Mass regularly, and is a member of the Sisterhood of St. Theresa. She seldom leaves her island home except to go to church. Tony, the ten-year-old son, is a bright little fellow. He goes to Miami daily on a roadster driven by one of his father's Pretorian Guards to attend school conducted by the Jesuit Fathers of the Church of the Redeemer, where he was recently confirmed. She lives in constant fear that Tony may be kidnapped or her husband assassinated. More than one bomb has been thrown over the barricade of the Spanish villa by someone in a speedboat".

A good Catholic home, evidently, was not without its excitements; and one is sure that the good Jesuit Fathers were charmed to be entrusted with the education of the son of the king of vice.

It is amusing to learn that when the arch-gangster Al Capone was finally locked away in the prison of Alcatraz, he played the banjo during services in the Roman Catholic Chapel.

But before this man became "one of the greatest of the has-beens", and while his reign was at its bloodiest, 100 thousand Chicago churchgoers of other denominations entreated God in five hundred churches to be delivered from graft and corruption. Mr. Allsop writes: "The collective conscience of the Catholic gangsters seemed not to be

reached by this roundabout spiritual appeal, for 1928 statistics were seventy-two gang murders".

The Sicilian Catholic bandits had their gang within gangs, the Mafia. It is part of the obligations of a member of the Mafia to be a churchgoer, and yet a mafioso is deemed to do no wrong when he "kills, violates and bleeds other human beings". Kenneth Allsop, describing the mafioso, says: "He is, as a Catholic, at peace with God . . . His attitude towards the saints is proprietous and patronising rather than reverent". So perhaps it was an act of simple patronage rather than reverence which led the Chicago Mafia to accept, at one time, an unfrocked priest, Anthony D'Andrea, as their leader.

Anyway, it is no act of patronage to recommend Kenneth Allsop's new book in the highest terms: it is simple justice to a record which sizzles with sensation and social conscience.

Richard Kyle-Keith's *The High Price of Pornography* (Public Affairs Press, Washington, \$4.50) is a new review of the social problems associated with the avalanche of smut magazines and sadistic paper-backs which are pulped out in the States. The author also includes a short history of morals through the ages — either to cheer us with the thought that things have never been too sanitary, or to add to the gloom.

Glancing at The Middle Ages, he comments: "The list of medieval immoralities is endless. There is the story of one French bishop who was reputed to have had sixty-five illegitimate children from as many different women . . . The Bishop of Winchester had a lucrative brothel almost next door to his palace — the term 'Winchester Geese' survives to this day . . . One English cardinal purchased a brothel as an investment for church funds, and there was some serious argument among canon law jurists that the Church was entitled to ten per cent of the girl's earnings".

Well, the list may be endless; but perhaps this is a sufficient reminder for the moment.

## Notes from Abroad

"HERDERKORRESPONDENZ", the German Press Agency of the Hierarchy, gives the following gloomy picture of life under the Lord's inscrutable guidance (issue of March, 1961):

"Nearly 40 million people still die every year from the effects of hunger. Two thirds of all those born into this world fail to reach their 30th year of life. Of 900 million children, 500 million are destined to starvation, poverty, sickness, malnutrition and lack of education. In Africa half the children born, die before their 15th year. There are parts of the world where there is a single doctor for 100,000 people (whilst in Germany their number is 135). From all corners of the world, our bishops receive calls for help, would require 250 m DM, yet hardly a third of that sum could be collected".

Is it necessary to remind that Rome is the richest organisation in the world and could easily afford that whole amount without recourse to any collection — that is, if the Holy See were interested in helping the poor? The same Press Agency carries, by coincidence, a notice that the diocese of Linz (Austria, under 200,000 inhabitants) in 1960 contributed 13,935.45 DM (about £1,300) as "Peter's Pence".

★

We never read this about the happenings that preceded the resignation of Senhor Quadros. When he went so far as to invite President Tito to visit Brazil, the Cardinal of Rio de Janeiro went into fits of rage and ordered, should

this visit materialise, that in memory of the martyrdom (*sic*) of Cardinal Stepinac all churches should ring their funeral bells. "The Catholic martyrs would turn in their graves, if the greatest Catholic country in the world (i.e. Brazil, with 70 per cent of the population analphabets) were to open its gates to Communism".

★

In November 1960 the Spanish Church issued an episcopal letter with the following declaration: "Every criticism must cease after a bishop has spoken (*todo criterio proprio tiene que ceder*); for loyalty to Christ's gospel can only be realised via the hierarchy".

(Culled from *Der Freidenker*. Germany, by O.W.)

## "Ambit"

PERHAPS I AM a little prejudiced towards *Ambit*, "a quarterly of poems, short stories, drawings and criticism", published at 62 Hornsey Lane, London, N.6., at 10/- a year, post free. Not only does the present issue, No. 9, contain some intriguing drawings of Heligoland by my friend, Oswald Blakeston, but the magazine is edited by Martin C. O. Bax, who spoke second to me when we successfully debated with a Jesuit and a lay Catholic at Guy's Hospital a few years ago.

Anyway I found *Ambit* 9 both varied and interesting. There are some beautiful — more orthodox — drawings by Eric Huson, that would grace any paper; there is a moving poem, "Old Man", by Neil Curry; a charming little one on "Children's Games", by John Dixon Hunt; and there is an introduction to "Serialism", by Patrick Riley. I liked, too, Martin Harris's short story about a fairground fat lady, "Miss Ima Ton", though I am not sure it needed so many "Christs!"

Mr. Bax writes a persuasive introductory essay on "Approaching the Abstract", and warns readers that much of the art work in the next issue will be non-representational. This will not be to all tastes, but then one of the aims of *Ambit* is to influence taste. C. McC.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### AN ENCOURAGEMENT

May I congratulate all concerned in publishing "Atheism and the Industrial Revolution" (30/6/61), especially, of course, the author, Mr. F. A. Ridley. It was an excellent empirical view of the great advance of Secularism, and provided a vista of the great opportunities that the modern world offers to Atheism. Our founders were obliged to spend an enormous amount of time in convincing an illiterate populace that the Bible was not the word of an infallible God. They have been so convincing that the priesthood today accepts evolution and denies the Genesis myth of creation. Such an article as Mr. Ridley's gives encouragement to Atheists, who are so often handicapped by the atrocious underhanded boycott by the "men of God". J. KING.

### THANKS

I should like to thank you for your courtesy in inserting the note asking for a visit from fellow Freethinkers. Thanks to a good comrade from Belfast who, being in the neighbourhood, came to see the 86-er (not 76-er as printed), and cheered him up by his young energetic presence. It was gratifying to an old-timer to see that young people are in the freedom fight carrying on where we must leave off. JAMES H. MATSON  
(6 Primrose Road, Dover.)

### NO GROUNDS

I am not sure how seriously we are expected to treat "This Believing World", but the necessity for light-hearted writing is no excuse for wild assumptions. The second item on September 15th, referred to an "animal torturer (no doubt thoroughly indoctrinated by Christianity)". Apparently your writer has no grounds whatever for his parenthetical accusation. J. HARLAND.

### MEMBER'S DOUBT

Mr. D. Kennedy (15/9/61) "sees no reason to be unfriendly with a fox-hunting atheist, an agnostic who is all for vivisection

or an unbeliever who is a lover of the monarchy". Nor do I. In fact I number them all among my friends. And, of course "we must accord them the right to hold their own opinions in these matters". Not only that; they are at liberty to voice such opinions at National Secular Society conferences, where the "Immediate Practical Objects" come up for periodic review and are voted on.

It was an NSS conference that passed a resolution supporting the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. If Mr Kennedy had wished, he could have put down a motion for the last conference that the Society cease to support the CND. Apparently he prefers to fume in private, then resign, and now he prefers to abuse CND supporters as cranks, weirdies and hypocrites. It is clearly useless disputing with him. Instead I will end on a note of agreement. He is quite right when he says that "The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament stems from fear" — a very real fear. The more people fear nuclear war, the safer I shall feel. It is those who are bold about it are the menace. COLIN MCCALL,

Secretary, National Secular Society.

## OBITUARY

The death took place on September 13th, at Halifax General Hospital after a two week's illness, of Andrew Corina (senior) of 30 Wheatley Road, Halifax. He was in his 79th year, and leaves a family of six sons and two daughters, one of whom is F. J. Corina, a member of the National Secular Society Executive, whose tribute will appear next week. The Halifax Co-operative funeral hall was crowded for the secular service on September 18th, when the family and friends were joined by Freethinkers, Socialists and Co-operators. The cremation was at Park Wood Crematorium, Halifax.

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