

The Freethinker

Volume LXXXV—No. 45

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

IN THE last few years, until recently almost unnoticed, an exciting new development in social welfare has been taking shape. This is "Domiciliary Birth Control"—contraceptive advice offered in their own homes to those who most need it. It is common enough to grumble and sneer at the stupidity of those people who, because of either ignorance or religious prejudice, persist in having enormous numbers of children they neither want nor can care for properly—children whose fate it is to be dragged up in neglect, often ill-treated, perhaps early finding themselves in children's homes or Approved schools, and who, perhaps worst of all, are likely to become the parents of the next generation of problem families. A number of doctors and welfare officials—mostly connected with the Family Planning Association—realised that it is often those most in need of contraceptive advice who find it hardest to obtain. A woman who has borne six or seven children in as many years is usually in such a state of physical and mental exhaustion that she will never find out for herself what she most needs to know. Instead of blaming such women, far-sighted authorities in a few areas are doing something to help them.

The Start

The first scheme was started in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1959, a second in Southampton in 1961, and a third in a small part of the London County Council area in 1963. In each case the arrangement has been for a doctor to call at homes of large families known to be in difficulties. For some the trouble was merely ill-health and poverty; others had serious housing problems; many had been on National Assistance; some were mental defectives; some of the parents had been in prison, some of the children in institutions. Every family was facing problems with which it was unable to cope. Clearly the prospects for further children born into these families was poor—and it was likely that a child would be born into each almost every year for some time to come.

Patience and Reward

Infinite patience was required from the teams of medical and social workers employed. Repeated calls were made at the patients' homes—as many as might be needed. Whenever possible both husband and wife were interviewed, so that they could agree on the importance of the matter and choose a contraceptive method acceptable to both. There were inevitable disappointments but, considering the characters of many of the couples involved, these were few. In Southampton 110 families produced 111 fewer babies in the first two years of the scheme than they had in the previous two years! The other results were similar. All the schemes decisively proved their worth during the experimental period. Voluntary organisations had given the money for the experiments, but happily the local authorities concerned were so impressed with the results and decided to continue the schemes themselves.

Regarded merely from the financial point of view, Domiciliary Birth Control is a sound investment. The medical

officer responsible for the London scheme has estimated an annual cost of about £8 per family. As the maternity grant is £22, and as the reduction in births is about one child per family every two years, it is clear that the saving in maternity grants alone should be enough to pay for the service. The saving in family allowances (£26 a year for each child), in National Assistance, to the health services and to local authorities add up to a significant sum. The financial argument for this service is not the main one. It is worth running for its contribution to individual happiness and community health, and would be so even if it involved heavy net expenditure. Still, it is pleasant to find a valuable extension of social welfare which need not be held back in the interests of economy, but will pay for itself almost immediately.

Benefits

But the financial saving is the least of it. There is the benefit to the families, when mothers released from the constant burden of pregnancy and tiny babies have at last energy to give to home-making. The relationship between husband and wife has often improved greatly too, once the fear of pregnancy is lifted from the wife. The community also gains in more important things than money. Grossly underprivileged children give rise to educational and disciplinary problems in the schools which make the teachers' task harder, and hold back educational advance. They are likely to grow up to be the parents of similar families themselves, thus perpetuating the problem. They may become habitual criminals, drifting in and out of prison throughout their depressing lives. Fine characters can of course emerge in the most unlikely places, and a few might have become valuable citizens, but the prospects for most of the children whose births have been prevented would have been bleak. It is pleasing, too, to note the improvement in the outlook for the existing children of these families.

Shyness and Ignorance

The Southampton team, with true devotion to scientific method, had intended to have a "control group". They expected that some of the families on their list would refuse their help, and the team could then have observed the downward progress of these people, and compared their fortunes to those of the couples accepting advice. But no such cases were forthcoming! Without exception, all those approached wanted help. Presumably there were Catholics among them, but if so it must have been ignorance and despair, rather than dogged adherence to their religion, which had brought them into their dismal plight. This suggests that the Church's ban on contraception is effective, less because Catholics fear to disobey the Church than because their training makes them too shy to ask for advice or too ignorant to know how to obtain it.

However, one extremely disturbing point does emerge. In an account of the London scheme we read: "On notification of the address of a problem family, the Medical Officer sought the agreement of the general practitioner to

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Family Planning at Home

By MARGARET McILROY

visit and discuss with the wife her previous reproductive history and contraceptive experience. In a very small number of cases the general practitioner withheld his permission and no further action was taken". We are not told—was the Medical Officer?—on what grounds permission was refused. There could hardly be a medical reason, and one can only suppose the objection was religious. If this is so the general practitioners concerned acted with appalling high-handedness against the interests of patients whose wishes were not consulted, and who are unlikely ever to know of their doctor's action. Equally shocking is the spineless acquiescence of the officials, who, presumably in conformity with some peculiar idea of professional etiquette, gave general practitioners this right of veto. How necessary it is to remain on guard against the last-ditch resistance of religion to progress, and also against the encroachments of officialdom on the citizen's right to make his own decision in these matters!

The important part played by the Family Planning

Association in these developments should not go unrecognised. The original projects in Newcastle and Southampton were prompted by the efforts of two dedicated FPA doctors, and the FPA has, on the basis of its experience in this kind of work, prepared an outline for pilot domiciliary visiting schemes.

The value of Domiciliary Birth Control is now proved, and its extension to cover the whole country is an urgent necessity. Its value in promoting human happiness inside the families benefiting is matched only by its value in preventing some of the worst problems confronting teachers, welfare officers and probation officers from ever arising. And, wonder of wonders, this great extension of the social services would save, instead of costing, money! Doubtless all the forces of religious bigotry and of dull inertia will oppose it, but every Freethinker should be campaigning now for Parliament to make the provision of a Domiciliary Birth Control Service for parents in difficulties one of the statutory duties of local authorities.

Window on the World

By OTTO WOLFGANG

THE Pope's UNO performance was duly accompanied by the rapt shrieks of the cheerleaders of "public opinion"; what in fact it amounted to was an excuse for Pope Paul's wanderlust and a free window-dressing for Roman Catholicism. If the real purpose was peace, then the richest organisation in the world could have done more than just talk. It did nothing to convince the Americans that they are waging a war of destruction and intervention in a far-away Asian country under the pretext that they are curbing somebody else, represented as the Big Bad Wolf. Nor did it help the millions of miserable paupers in the Indian sub-continent who have been slaughtering each other for mainly religious animosities. Why did Paul VI not rather cease blocking progressive trends in the Vatican Council such as birth control?

Edward L. Erickson, leader of the Washington Ethical Society, had the courage to speak out his mind in a radio broadcast given in Washington, DC, when he stated that "our involvement in Vietnam is an abomination" committed by people with vested interests and under a pretense which is "so patently false that, if we used our brains at all, we could not give it credit". *American Freethinker*, (Jan.-Feb. 65).

The Philosophical Library, New York, has published an indictment of the Christian Churches for inculcating into the minds of their faithful the poison of anti-Semitism. It is Dagobert D. Runes's *The Jew and the Cross* (\$2.75) in which the author says: "There is no dialogue necessary between Christians and Jews. All we wish is the pontifical monologue to stop accusing the Jews of deicide". Well—it would improve the moral standing of Christianity today, but it wouldn't stop Jew-baiting which, in this country at least, has only recently been superseded by Negro-baiting.

In an exclusive article, *Le Nouvel Observateur* (September 7th) unravels the close connections between the political party of the Vatican—Democrazia Cristiana—and the infamous Mafia. Public demands to set up a commission to investigate into the Mafia reign of terror in Sicily were countered by the sop that all these stories were exaggerated inventions of romantic writers (comparable to the fancies written about Scotland Yard and all sorts of detectives). The Italian Christian Democrats, being the amalgam of reactionary landlords and fruit merchants, together with the forces of dynamic capitalism, feel the pinch of the agri-

cultural crisis, and by adapting itself to the demands of the Common Market, the party is now under the sway of its capitalist wing whose press (*La Stampa* among them) has at long last succeeded in getting the commission of inquiry set up.

The September issue of *Freigeistige Aktion* (Germany) draws attention to the fact that from 1877 up to Mussolini's reign, RI was not allowed to be taught inside Italian schools. Once in power, the Duce—married in a register office and with his children not baptised—immediately amended these "shortcomings" by marrying again, this time in church, and having his children properly baptised. In 1929 he concluded the Lateran Agreement by which the Vatican received another 1,750 mill. Lire, free of tax. Last year, Nenni, the Vice-Premier stated that "no socialist can tolerate tax exemption for the immensely rich Vatican, whilst the workers are being urged to accept a wage freeze".

L'Espresso has it that Signor Moro, the Prime Minister of the present coalition government, offered Cardinal Cicognani, the Vatican State Secretary, a compromise solution granting tax exemption provided the Holy See declared annually its holdings of Italian shares, upon which Cicognani threatened to rock the boat by selling Italian shares and exchanging them for foreign ones. (See also *Der Spiegel*, July 14th).

In May last 250 Marxists and Christian theologians had a discussion in Salzburg. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* commented that the Roman Catholics were unable to talk the Communists out of their atheism, but considering latest developments on either side of the Iron Curtain it was necessary to have a forum of information and explanation.

However, on June 30th, the *Dallas Morning News*, of Dallas, Texas, carried an editorial on Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (the section dealing with fair or equal employment practices). "The only exceptions allowed under the provision are", the paper said, "that employers, agencies and unions may discriminate" (1) against members of the Communist Party, (2) against atheists or (3) in "certain instances where religion, sex or national origin is a *bone fide* occupational qualification . . .".

Having become respectable in our affluent society, the Social Democrats have entirely broken with Marx and are

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Not So Hidden Persuaders

By KIT MOUAT

IN MUCH the same way as nations negotiate for peace in other people's wars while supplying the arms to keep those wars going, so men and women provide ammunition for the sex war in which we are all inevitably victims. Some of the most obvious aggressors are perhaps the advertisers who write slogans like:

"His woman — his drink." "His world of beautiful things — cars, yachts, girls . . ."

Put it the other way round for a moment:

"Her world of beautiful animals — poodles, kittens, men"; it's grim enough, although at least men are classified among the living possessions some women might hope to acquire.

And then there is the advertising that panders to the snob-appeal that still clings to Christian rituals. The photograph of a parish church with a group standing under the lychgate; black-skirted clergymen, mother carrying newly-baptised baby and so on. In the foreground are six parked cars. Underneath, the message reads:

"Your car is on the threshold of a new life, too, thanks to Shell Super Oil . . ."

Girl babies baptised in holy Shell grow up into reliable minis, able to resist lurking jaguars (or tigers in the male tanks). Use Super-Baptism! Top people rely on Shell! You too can have faith in God and the Advertisers! Long live the monopolies . . .!

I have been a little dismayed to find how many men in the Humanist Letter Network stipulate an age for the female companionship they are hoping to find through the post. Apart from the fact that this makes the work complicated for me (there are so few women anyway), it had never occurred to me that the value of my sex in friendship bore any relation to the faculty of women for child-bearing. Perhaps I am prejudiced. I had a grandmother and mother who were 13 and 5 years older than their husbands respectively and quite happy about it, and I am at an age when I don't feel any different from those who are 25 years younger or older than I am. At the same time I have to realise that while to one group I may appear relatively immature, to the other I am an antique. Women in middle-age, then, expect a sense of balance from men of their own generation; men who must realise just how little one does alter with the years and what a comfort it is not to be as young as we were.

I suppose it is largely a matter of sexual potency and wishful thinking. A man in his late 60s or even 70s may still be anxious to father a family, and therefore wants a woman who is still able to bear children; but the Network isn't a Marriage Bureau. Anyway, fatherhood on such a short-term policy is surely rather selfish? Parenthood means a sharing of the duties and the fun of children for some sixteen years or so. Being a father or mother (non-reverend and outside the church in which a mockery is made of the status) demands considerable physical endurance and a mental elasticity not necessarily preserved with the ability to beget. Perhaps nature has been kinder to women by making it quite clear when the time to cease being a parent has arrived.

Women seem more willing to see men as primarily human beings even if sexually unobtainable or unattractive. Yes, let's face it, women as well as men have their physical preferences, even if they are more likely than men to ignore the defects out of love or sympathy. Perhaps

men are the creators of the advertising nonsense just because they are No. 1 victims of the myth. The myth that Saint Paul made fashionable which at first denied women sex and still denies them humanity.

We constantly see this sort of thing: "How to keep your husband's eye on you. Answer: shampoo away grey the Poly way. It's so natural."

As "natural" as the celibacy of nuns or Vatican roulette. The idea that a man takes his eye off his wife (it is on a billiard ball in the picture) if her hair changes colour naturally is an extraordinary insult to the male. Or do British men really want women for ever to pretend about their ages? We may go grey, but at least we don't go thin on top, and what if women considered friendship or marital attraction impossible with the owner of a pot belly? I cannot believe that many men are so shallow or silly, and yet this is what the advertisers want us to believe. Come to think of it, we don't hear many men denying that the implications are true!

"One way to feel like a million dollars is to have a million dollars. Another is to have some Lady Manhattan (most girls happily admit they would like both!). Oh they do, do they? "Lady Manhattan . . . a champagne cocktail of a perfume. Wear it [yes, it says 'wear', not 'drink'] and the world is your oyster". I never did like oysters anyway, and I would like the world a lot better without this nauseating attack on human sense. On the other hand, I love perfume, and why not? The nose is a most valuable organ, and too many of the smells of modern life need an antidote.

These sort of advertisements are found in *Nova*, "the new magazine for the new kind of woman", and if that's what the "new" kind of woman wants, thank goodness I'm not one of them. Not grey yet; just a little haggard, but who cares? And there we come down to it. None of us who are lucky in our marriages can afford to scoff at the woman dying her hair blue or at the man who runs after his own fading youth in the shape of a filly. It must be like having an ever-open wound to live believing that one can only receive love by giving an entirely false impression. Most women can remember, perhaps, the teenage hours when we wondered if any man would be able to face us first thing in the morning. (My own teenage was partly spent with the added burden of white shirts and collars, stud-marks in the neck and knickers called "black-outs".) Even then it never occurred to us that the suffering might not be all male, that we would be at the receiving end of a bristle-growth of beard and that the horrors (and honours) would be about equal between the sexes. For some women those hours of anxiety must be extended indefinitely, so that friendship becomes as remote as marriage was for the surplus women of the last era.

A mere birth date means nothing. It tells nothing about the capacity for honesty or companionship, love or sex, nor about anything at all save, perhaps, the physical ability to bear a child. Nor does it tell us any longer about experience. An unmarried woman is not necessarily any more sexually inexperienced than a man, nor waiting for proposals that never come. Age has nothing to do with friendship, in which men and women may one day begin to learn to help and understand one another a little better.

Just as I believe that Adam, too, has suffered from the

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This Believing World

SO EVEN the *Observer* (10/10/65) has at last acknowledged that there are two "disunited" parties in the Church of England, Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals! The latter have as their leader, the Bishop of Woolwich, whose teaching is regarded by Dr. J. I. Packer—the principal theologian of the National Assembly of Evangelicals—as leading to "disaster for the Christian faith in Britain". It is says Dr. Packer, both "Godless and Christless".

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WHAT THE Evangelicals can do now, surely, is to prove the other party wrong. And why don't they? Is God sitting on a cloud in Heaven or is he not? If the Evangelicals maintain that he is, why don't they say so openly; and explain exactly where and how? Perhaps, they are as ashamed of this primitive conception as Dr. Robinson, but haven't the nerve to admit it. Perhaps they, like the Bishop also recognise that they are living in 1965 not 65!

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JOHN OSBORNE, whose first successful play gave the name to the Angry Young Men of the post-war years, has written a number of other good plays, since—*The Entertainer* and *Inadmissible Evidence* to name but two. Perhaps his most ambitious, however, is *Luther*, which caused a good deal of controversy when first produced a few years ago. Now it has been seen on TV, though in a much-abridged form. Even so, we can imagine a lot of angry outbursts by Roman Catholics.

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BUT FOR some of us the main lesson of the play was that, apart from his outbursts against indulgencies and similar corruptions in the Church of Rome, there was precious little difference between Luther's Protestantism and Catholicism. As Mr. Osborne presented it, this was rather like a religious version of Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

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WE KNEW it would come—the protest against a coloured Archbishop. The *Daily Mirror* (15/10/65) published a photograph of one who is to be Archbishop of New Orleans; there was also a woman with a banner declaring "God does not recognise Negro priests, bishops". But if the lady is a Christian she must know that God does recognise Negroes as his children and is presumably prepared to accept them as his priests. Why, there are statues in existence depicting Jesus Christ as a Negro.

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SOME SECTS of Christians (as mentioned in Notes and News last week) are disappointed that the Vatican Council has lessened the guilt of the Jews for the crucifixion. Some of the Greek dignitaries hold that "all believers in the Jewish faith should be held responsible for Christ's death" (*The Observer* 17/10/65). It is a pity that Jewish scholars do not declare that there is no evidence whatever of any trial or crucifixion. Some of them have at least demonstrated the impossibility of the trial as depicted in the New Testament.

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BULLION and plate which the Church of England never uses should be handed over to the state in return for grants to restore and maintain church buildings, suggested the Rev. Stephen Hopkinson, Rector of Bobbingworth, Essex, in the latest issue of the Southwark diocesan review, *Bridge*. No one knows the value of the Church's property, he said, but it was one of the biggest holders in Britain. Apart, however, from "actual buildings and available sites", it had "a great deal of treasure hidden away in safes, museums and the like". Again, "no one can estimate the value in terms of bullion alone of the plate and other valuables

which are never actually in use". And Mr. Hopkinson saw "neither sense nor moral justification in retaining technical 'ownership' of objects only to be shown as museum pieces". But isn't the Church itself something of a museum piece?

WINDOW ON THE WORLD

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now increasingly protesting their Christian beliefs. The philosopher Dr. Gunther Nenning, president of the Austrian Union of Journalist has just published a book, *Europa Verlag*, in which he proclaims "Social Democracy" as the modern Gospel, asserting "No longer can Socialists evade the fact that there is a God". (*Kurier*, Vienna, September 27th).

In 1950, Holland's State Institute for War Documentation commissioned Dr. J. Presser, University Professor of History, to write about the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" in the Netherlands. The Hamburg weekly, *Die Zeit*, of September 10th has dealt with the first two volumes (on the persecution and extermination of Holland's Jewry between 1940-45), and Rudolf Augstein chief-editor of another Hamburg weekly, *Der Spiegel*, on February 15th, took the Roman Catholic Church to task for her part in these persecutions. She had been very dilatory in confessing any complicity. Far from it, she presented herself as the only opponent of Hitlerism and shouted down any disagreeing criticism. Immediately after 1945 she even mustered the bold effrontery to arrogate anew the right to direct the political conscience of their faithful. "It cannot be stressed too much", Augstein said, "that the political opinions and recommendations and the actions of the Church are rarely inspired by the Holy Ghost, but rather by her overriding self-interest".

Among the millions of Roman Catholics in the Reich, only seven had the courage to rebel publicly and to refuse, in principle, to serve in the unjust war; and six of them were executed, with the full approval of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. In 1945 the people were made answerable for Nazi crimes and Nazi support, but not a single bishop was among those who lost their jobs. Why this different measure? Augstein sums up that, "The Church has to watch not only our beliefs but—as she pretends—also our morals . . . consequently her own morals must stand examination in the light of her political past".

NOT SO HIDDEN PERSUADERS

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fable that Eve grew out of a bone near his heart rather than from one near his brain, so I believe today men may suffer most from their inability to see themselves clearly and to consider women as human beings in whom sex and maternity are only parts. And here I come back to my old hobby-horse of co-education. So long as boys and girls are educated separately in institutions that ape the monastery and nunnery, too many of them will grow up as unrealistic romantics or homosexuals.

The advertisers, the men who are taking over the authority of the priests and preserving the old religious myths, are constantly providing weapons in the war between the sexes and making it all the more difficult for us to enjoy human relationships with both sexes and with all ages. This is a high price to pay for petrol, perfume and piety. It is not Shell or Baptism or Lady Manhattan we need; it is some urgent and energetic new thinking. Surely Secularists should be able to lead the way.

THE FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1

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THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year £1 17s. 6d.; half-year, 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. In USA and Canada: One year, \$5.25; half-year, \$2.75; three months, \$1.40.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. J. W. BARKER, L. EBURY, J. A. MILLAR and C. E. WOOD.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch NSS (Platt Fields), Sunday, 3 p.m.: MESSRS. CLARE, MILLS and WOOD. (Car Park, Victoria Street), 8 p.m.: MESSRS. COLLINS, WOODCOCK, and others.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead)—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Abortion Law Reform Association (Kensington Central Library, Phillimore Walk, London, W.8), Saturday, November 6th, 6.30 p.m.: Film, "Abortion and the Law". Forum on Abortion: Speakers include DR. ANNE BIEZANEK, DR. EUSTACE CHESSER, DR. DAVID KERR, M.P., and MISS DEE WELLS.

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group (Regency House, Oriental Place), Sunday, November 7th, 5.30 p.m.: Dr. JOHN LEWIS, "Morality Without Religion".

Bristol Humanist Group (Transport House, Victoria Street), Tuesday, November 9th, 7.30 p.m.: MRS. R. SMITH, "Positive Materialism".

Kingston and Surbiton Branches NSS (The White Hart Hotel, Kingston Bridge), Friday, November 5th, 8 p.m.: L. EBURY, Subject to be announced.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, November 7th, 6.30 p.m.: ALEX ROBERTSON, "Crime—Punishment or Treatment?"

Marble Arch Branch NSS (Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, November 7th, 7.30 p.m.: ERIC KENTON, "The Press Council and the *South London Press*".

Richmond and Twickenham Humanist Group (Room 4, Community Centre, Sheen Road), Thursday, November 11th, 8 p.m.: Dr. STANLEY RUNDLE, "Minor Drugs and Minors".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, November 7th, 11 a.m.: F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT, "Law and Morals". Tuesday, November 9th, 7.30 p.m.: CELIA FREMLIN, "A Housewife looks at Affluence".

Notes and News

THE BBC's play of the month on October 19th, was John Osborne's *Luther*. Unfortunately, it was slashed disastrously to compress it into an hour and a half. Many fine speeches were mutilated. The Knight who introduces each act was dispensed with, the great climax of the smashing of the banner after Luther's support of the nobles against the peasants, was therefore lost. Alec McCowen seemed not quite right in the title role—certainly not as good as Albert Finney, the original Luther—while the Tetzels of Patrick Magee had nothing of the exuberance of Peter Bull's indulgence vendor. Altogether, we agree with Philip Oakes (in a BBC-2 interview) that the play was "truncated" and "overproduced"; and that we should have been given three hours of Osborne. *Luther* is worth it. In our opinion it is the best play of our best living playwright. Mr. Oakes's interviewer recalled that, when first produced, the play upset both Catholics and Protestants, and asked "Did it upset you?" As an Atheist, Mr. Oakes replied, "No".

ON THE subject of plays—and especially plays disliked by Catholics—we learn that Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy* is to be staged in Chicago in February next year.

THE futility of Pope Paul's speech to the United Nations was splendidly demonstrated by James Cameron, in an article in the *New Statesman* (22/10/65). The Pope urged the nations of the world to ban war and the delegates and the press "gave it better coverage than the Sermon on the Mount". Both they and His Holiness should, Mr. Cameron said, "have boned up on their contemporary history". War has been banned; the "whole thing is illegal" and "has been for a generation". It was officially outlawed in the Covenant of the League of Nations and the process has since been repeated time and again. We have "done a great deal of formal war-outlawing to no great purpose. Every nation that formally renounces war . . . does so with the built-in proviso that its own personal interests shall not be impeded nor its own national style be cramped". The Pope, in fact, perpetuated what Mr. Cameron called "the quaint old notion" that war can be got rid of by uttering phrases about it, "like indigestion or BO".

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"WORDS will always win", Mr. Cameron added. "Thus the reverence for a Vatican that denounces war while carefully refraining from criticising those at the moment waging it . . ."

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THE REVIVAL of the worker priest experiment will be widely welcomed in France, according to the *Guardian* Paris correspondent (25/10/65), though he didn't indicate how "widely" or among whom. It would, he indicated, encounter rigorous opposition from right-wing Catholic quarters; and it will, we suggest, be treated with indifference by the majority of French workers. The wide welcome, we can only assume, will come from the more progressive Catholic clergy and laity, who are concerned about the "decline in Christian loyalty of the working class". Will this experiment be any more successful than the last, which was suppressed under Pope Pius XII? We cannot believe so.

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THE FRENCH episcopacy has said that the choice of priests to work full time in factories and on building sites will "have to conform to certain precise conditions", and that there will be "close relations with other priests and working-class Catholic Action militants in the sector in which they work". The worker priest will be able to join a trade union but "in view of the fact that temporal tasks are the proper role of the militant worker", the priest will "abstain from taking any responsibilities in political and syndical action". The trouble last time was, of course, that the worker priests became too worldly-minded. As *Time* remarked on September 28th, 1959: "By 1953, it was obvious that something had gone wrong; of almost 150 worker-priests, some 20 had married and left the Church, while others had joined Communist unions or Red-line causes. Pope Pius XII sternly limited *les prêtres ouvriers* to three hours of factory life a day, but only a handful submitted; others left the Church, and only 25 continued in their mission, eventually won limited approval from their bishops". But desperate cuts must have desperate cures.

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THE Agnostics Adoption Society has announced the appointment of Mrs. Daphne Bosch as organising secretary, and Mrs. Kirstine Richards as case worker. The address of the Society is 55 Dawes Street, London, S.E.17, and the telephone number, Rodney 9660. An article by David Tribe on "Agnostic Adoption", which first appeared in THE FREETHINKER, has been published as a leaflet, and is available free from the National Secular Society.

Sir Robert Stout, Charles Bradlaugh and the Irish

By RICHARD P. DAVIS

IN THE 1880s the secularist movement was flourishing and influential in New Zealand. Dunedin possessed a strong Freethought Association and, intermittently, a weekly paper, the *Echo*. From 1880 to 1883 the *Echo* was edited by Robert Stout, one of the greatest figures in New Zealand history. As Premier (1884-1887) and as Chief Justice (1899-1926), Stout has left an indelible imprint on our national life. His interests were so wide that he was able to talk and write incessantly on numerous subjects. Before returning to politics in 1884 he devoted considerable time to Rationalism: lecturing regularly to the Freethinkers' Association, giving funeral addresses for departed members and writing much of the *Echo*. In late 1883 the latter was forced to suspend publication as a result of advertisers' hostility and Stout's other commitments.

At this time freethinkers everywhere were shocked by the treatment of Charles Bradlaugh, who had been elected to the British House of Commons for Northampton in 1880. Bradlaugh, a man of immense courage and physical strength, was a powerful exponent of three causes which horrified the comfortably pious Victorian middle classes — atheism, birth control and republicanism. To make matters worse, Bradlaugh was in the habit of speaking directly to the people in language which they could understand. Could the complacent British MPs endure such a colleague? The answer was soon given, in spite of the fact that there were already freethinkers in both the Liberal and Conservative parties.

A complicated struggle in both parliament and the law courts ensued which dragged on for years. In their speeches Bradlaugh's opponents showed a complete lack of decency and good taste. Though his leader Gladstone supported him, Bradlaugh was allowed neither to affirm his allegiance nor to take the normal parliamentary oath on the Bible, something other freethinkers had done with reservations. Three times Bradlaugh's election was quashed and three times his constituents re-elected him. He did, however, manage in the middle of the struggle to sit precariously as an MP for nine months between 1880 and 1881. He was very active. Among other liberal actions he brought forward the question of the Maoris imprisoned without trial for participating in Te Whiti's passive resistance movement against land confiscation in Taranaki. When excluded from the Commons in August, 1881, it took ten strong constables to remove Bradlaugh from the House by force.

The *Echo* gave full support to Bradlaugh, and subscriptions came in from Nelson, the West Coast and Christchurch for a fund opened on his behalf. For Stout the issue was complicated by his other activities. He was an uncompromising advocate of the New Zealand system of free, secular and compulsory education at a time when the Catholic clergy were aggressively demanding state aid for their schools. They tried, in fact, to force the Catholic laymen, most of whom were Irish, to deliver a bloc vote against any parliamentary candidate, who, like Stout, opposed their claims. But many New Zealand Irish almost venerated Stout for some lectures he had delivered in 1881 supporting Irish Home Rule and justifying the Irish Land League in its fight against landlord tyranny.

This defence was sorely needed. The cable reports published in the New Zealand press invariably exhibited anti-Irish bias and editorial comment was equally hostile.

Bradlaugh, like Stout, had long been an advocate of Irish Home Rule. His eye-witness account of the brutal eviction of an Irish peasant family was quoted with approval by Catholic priests. When allowed to sit in parliament, Bradlaugh normally voted with Parnell's Irish Nationalists and once led the party in Parnell's absence. At first the Protestant Parnell and some Catholic Irishmen repaid the compliment by voting for Bradlaugh in divisions on the oath. Then in 1883 there was a *volte face* and nearly all the Irish MPs, including Parnell, ranged themselves solidly against Bradlaugh. Stout was outraged. This, he expostulated, was clerical dictation at its worst. He soon found an opportunity to show his disapproval.

In 1883 John Redmond, later leader of the Irish Nationalists, was sent to collect money for his cause in Australasia. His tour was moderately successful in spite of considerable opposition. The brutal Phoenix Park murders of 1882 were generally, though incorrectly, attributed to Redmond's party. Worse still, the Pope, by condemning a collection for Parnell, had sown doubt in the minds of many Australasian Irish. Consequently influential Catholics avoided Redmond. Stout, too, announced his opposition in a letter to the press. He denied that the Irish Nationalists had connived at murder and asked that a fair hearing should be given to Redmond. He argued, however, that to assist the Irish MPs after their treatment of Bradlaugh — and Redmond had voted against Bradlaugh in an early division — would be "to strike a blow at human liberty." This letter was published in several papers and must have carried weight, as Stout had been an early critic of Irish wrongs.

When Redmond addressed a meeting at Ashburton a hostile amendment relating to Bradlaugh was proposed from the floor. Redmond countered by arguing that the Irish had voted against Bradlaugh not because of his atheism, but because of his opposition to Ireland. Stout immediately wrote to the press challenging Redmond to substantiate his statement. He appended a list of Bradlaugh's divisions showing that Bradlaugh had voted with the Irish except when they were deliberately obstructive. Redmond did not accept this challenge, but one of his New Zealand supporters was forced to admit that religion was the decisive issue. This is also the verdict of W. L. Arnstein, a recent historian of the affair.

Stout at this time also maintained a vigorous attack on the Catholic church in the *Echo*, in lectures and in the daily press. The Irish, he said, would never be free until they broke the back of the clerical tyranny that enslaved them: secular education was their only hope. He cited statistics to prove that more delinquents were produced by Catholic schools than by secular schools. Stout, however, still believed in Irish Home Rule which he hoped would loosen the priestly grip on the country. In spite of these views, there were Irish Catholics in 1884 offering assistance in the election which established Stout as one of the first openly freethinking premiers in the British Commonwealth.

The story has an epilogue. In 1889 another Irish MP,

John Dillon, brought a delegation to New Zealand. This time Stout was one of his chief supporters and spoke more eloquently for Ireland than Dillon himself. Why? One reason was the settlement of the Bradlaugh case. In 1886 a new Speaker allowed Bradlaugh to take the oath without further argument. Bradlaugh then fought so hard for Gladstone's unsuccessful Irish Home Rule Bill that an Irish MP apologised: "Mr. Bradlaugh, you have been the best Christian of us all." When Bradlaugh later introduced a bill allowing MPs to affirm their allegiance there was virtually no opposition from the Irish and many voted for the bill which was passed. Finally, when Bradlaugh was dying in 1891, Gladstone persuaded the Commons to strike the 1881 resolution excluding Bradlaugh from its records. Some of the men who had opposed Bradlaugh, including Parnell, later suffered themselves at the hands of clerical authority.

Bradlaugh and Stout were fine examples of 19th century Liberalism. Both detested injustice and poverty, but neither believed that socialism was the answer. They emphasised the responsibility of the individual and this made them ardent temperance reformers. Both had legal training and were exceptionally good platform speakers. They never met. But Bradlaugh, when contemplating a visit to New Zealand, said that its chief attraction would be the opportunity for talking to Sir Robert.

[Reprinted from the *New Zealand Rationalist & Humanist*, August-September, 1965.]

Malcolm Muggeridge and Charles Bradlaugh

By H. CUTNER

AS AN interviewer on TV and as a literary man in general, Malcolm Muggeridge has made a big name for himself for many years. But when it comes to writing a review for the *Observer*, (29/8/65) on such a giant as Charles Bradlaugh, it is not quite good enough, as Mr. Muggeridge does, to say he has not read Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's important biography, nor therefore that very fine part of it by John M. Robertson dealing so fully not only with Bradlaugh's philosophy, his atheism and his Malthusianism, but also in detail with his Parliamentary career.

The book under review is Professor Walter L. Arnstein's *The Bradlaugh Case* (which I have not yet seen), but those of us who have read Robertson will at least know a good deal of the period in Bradlaugh's life in Parliament and particularly about one of the most disgraceful episodes in the history of our Parliament when, though he had been elected four times as the member for Northampton, he was not allowed to take his seat and once actually thrown out of the House of Commons by ten policemen. Professor Arnstein no doubt goes fully into the story, and even reproduces Sir John Tenniel's *Punch* cartoon, where Bradlaugh is shown on some steps with a number of boots, shoes, sticks and umbrellas behind him. The truth was something quite different.

On being elected, Bradlaugh asked to affirm instead of taking the oath, but this was disallowed. He had no belief in God but was prepared to follow the law and take the oath, pointing out at the time that the words had no meaning for him. This was refused. Bradlaugh thereupon had to go to Northampton and be elected again, but he was still not allowed to take his seat. He pleaded his case before the Bar of the House of Commons and was refused once more.

Bradlaugh, as a properly elected Member of Parliament in the end tried to take his seat but was even refused

admission to the House. When he did enter "ten powerful constables aided by four of the messengers . . . were set upon him", says John M. Robertson in his little book, *Charles Bradlaugh*, "and in a flash of fury at the ignoble device he resisted with all the strength of a great frame . . . the ten gladiators had a terrific task struggling desperately down the lobby stairs and all the way to the entrance . . .".

The cartoon by *Punch* shows nothing of the "ten gladiators", nothing of Bradlaugh's coat being torn, or indeed that there had been any struggle at all. Had Mr. Muggeridge tried to find out the truth, or even if the *Observer* had known what really happened, it would never have been reproduced.

However, what does Mr. Muggeridge really think of the incident? Just what one would have expected from him. He says,

If he [Bradlaugh] had taken the oath when he first presented himself to Parliament with whatever reservation he cared to make privately, as a good many Members did, all would have been well; but he first claimed the right to attest as a non-believer and, when this was disallowed, offered to take the oath, and "to call upon the name of God" which to him, as he explained, was a meaningless expression".

Some non-believers have adopted this attitude when elected to Parliament, but Bradlaugh was of different stature in an age of what J. M. Robertson called "revolting hypocrisy". In any case, when the Conservatives came into power, he was allowed to take his seat, and he promptly introduced his Oaths Bill which permits anyone to affirm where before he had to take the oath.

Mr. Muggeridge could not resist telling us how, in his young days, people declared that the late Horatio Bottomley was "the fruit of the illicit union" of Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant despite discrepancies in the dates". And Mr. Muggeridge had read *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant* where Bradlaugh is mentioned enough, "but he remains a shadowy figure". Bradlaugh "a shadowy figure" with his aggressive atheism, his aggressive Malthusianism, his iconoclastic debates, not only with first-class parsons, but with eminent Socialists; and above all his fight for the right of every man or woman to practice birth control, which led to the famous "Knowlton pamphlet" trial—in which both Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant risked a heavy prison sentence, and was the most talked of trial of the day. All these and much more, yet for Mr. Muggeridge, Bradlaugh is "a shadowy figure". It is amazing.

After all this, Mr. Muggeridge assures us that "Bradlaugh's subsequent performance in the House was disappointing" for "it gradually dawned upon his opponents and detractors that they had little to fear from one whose subversive attitudes were too idiosyncratic to be dangerous"; after which we are told that "as Professor Arnstein abundantly demonstrates, Bradlaugh was a doughty performer".

Exactly what Mr. Muggeridge expected Bradlaugh to do in the very few years he was in Parliament after what Robertson called his "Titanic parliamentary struggle", we are not told by Mr. Muggeridge, though as he lay dying, Parliament thoroughly ashamed of it and the ignoble part it had played, expunged from the journals of the House of Commons "the old resolutions excluding him". But Bradlaugh died before he could be told. And Mr. Muggeridge never mentions it.

If Mr. Muggeridge had read Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's biography, and in particular the patient and careful exposition of Bradlaugh's philosophy as well as the hugely detailed account of his parliamentary struggles, he would have seen how such a review as he wrote of Professor Arnstein's book was not only unfair but completely inadequate.

HELPING SOUTH AFRICAN RATIONALISTS

AS FREETHINKER readers know, the ban imposed by the Minister of Justice prevents Dr. Edward Roux from taking any active part in the affairs of the Rationalist Association of South Africa. He is prohibited from attending gatherings, both public meetings and committee meetings, and also from editing the Association's monthly paper, the *Rationalist* or "preparing anything for publication". There has been only one person able and willing to take over the editorial work and other jobs connected with seeing the journal through the press, and that is Dr. Roux's wife Winifred. Other members of the small committee do what they can to help. The paper continues to appear, but we learn that many readers have failed to renew their subscriptions during the past year. This is understandable under the prevailing conditions of a semi-totalitarian state. Quite a number of small independent periodicals in South Africa have recently ceased publication, a fact which was noted by Helen Suzman, the only member of the Progressive Party still in parliament. Dr. Roux does not think that his rationalist activity was the main reason for the ban, but it may have been an additional cause. In any case the *Rationalist* is now feeling the breeze, but the Rationalist Association intends to carry on if it possibly can.

Its survival obviously depends largely on what happens in South Africa itself, but overseas rationalists and humanists may be able to help. A hundred overseas subscribers at 10s. each, for instance would definitely boost the Association's finances. The total cost of producing and distributing the journal is only about £200 per year. 1,000 copies are printed of each issue, but most of these are distributed as propaganda tracts. By subscribing to this fine little paper British readers could show their sympathy and help the South African Rationalists financially.

We understand that the National Secular Society and the Rationalist Press Association are also helping the South African Rationalists by gifts of literature.

CORRESPONDENCE

VERY DIFFERENT

In your issue dated October 22nd, Mr. E. Markley criticises Mr. Micklewright for having, in his televised discussion with Dr. Soper, stated that our only information about the historic Jesus comes from a few fragments collected thirty or forty years after his death. He then applies the same criterion to Plato, Aristotle and Plutarch.

But there is all the difference in the world. These Greeks were *writers*, and their works, or some of them, have been preserved and handed down to us. I do not know of any mention or hint that Jesus ever *wrote* anything. Certainly nothing has survived, which would be remarkable if in fact he ever did commit his ideas to paper. Was he illiterate or semi-literate? Could there have been any literate people in the village of Nazareth where he plied his trade for most of his life? And could this have any connection with his hatred of the Scribes?

A. DOUGLAS.

THE MAN JESUS

What Mr. H. Cutner has to say about what my letter reminds him of is entirely irrelevant to the subject under discussion; in fact, the analogy he gives is entirely as false as his views on Sir James Frazer's alleged change of mind regarding the historical existence of Jesus.

I am not a young evangelist, nor am I horrified at Mr. Cutner's views on Jesus, but I will not be led astray by them. What Mr. Gladstone believed in is irrelevant, seeing that there is a vast difference between Sir James Frazer and Mr. Gladstone. Frazer is recognised as one of the greatest authorities in his field of thought, whereas Gladstone was a politician, and therefore knew little about anthropology and mythology. Mr. Cutner says that he is not afraid of big names, that may be so, but he has a liking for little names like that of Dr. Couchoud. Why should I take Dr. Couchoud's word before that of Frazer, because he happens to be of the same belief as Mr. Cutner? I can see no reason to

do so, and therefore I am on the side of atheists like Shelley and H. G. Wells who refused to deny Christ's existence.

The real trouble with Mr. Cutner is that he has no real big names and authorities to support his case, as even a great atheist like H. G. Wells is not on his side.

Wells knew the mythicist case and all the rest, so why did he not accept it? Perhaps Mr. Cutner will answer that question, and perhaps not. Anyway when I get to reading Dr. Couchoud's book (if I can find it) I may let Mr. Cutner know all about it. By the way, I don't believe in angels or devils, although I believe life is a sort of mystery.

R. SMITH.

THE LEOPARD IN A NEW SUIT

Miss Phyllis K. Graham (THE FREETHINKER, 8/10/65) has done a good work of statistics of calumnies against the Pope, including John XXIII, and the Church. Observing her ability in this matter, I take the liberty to invite her to note two other statistics: one regarding the works of the Church for the poor all over the world, such as hospitals, houses for the poor, schools, universities, providing food and clothing, the missions, etc.; and the other regarding similar philanthropic good made by Secularists.

G. M. PARIS, OP. (Malta).

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