

FREE THINKER

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SUBSIDISING SEGREGATION

The Secretary of State for Education and Science has announced his intention of introducing a bill to raise the Government building grant for voluntary (mostly church) schools from 75 to 80 per cent, and make all new voluntary schools eligible. This at a time when the importance of comprehensive education is being stressed, the evils of segregation recognised, and the country's economic situation in a parlous state.

The National Secular Society at once sent out a press release calling attention to the social and economic implications of "something which is backward-looking, illiberal and antisocial". The last important Canossa in the educational field was in 1959 when the grant was raised from 50 to 75 per cent and secondary schools built where there were existing primaries became eligible. It was outrageous enough then, and the Minister at the time subsequently said: "I was privately rather disappointed that the 'secularist deputation' to the Ministry at the time of the 1959 Act was quite so weak—not because I altogether agreed with what they said, but because I do have something of an old-fashioned Mill-ite predilection for freedom of thought and discussion."

In 1959 there were some extenuating circumstances. The country's economic situation seemed buoyant, and taxation and rating had not reached quite the crippling level they have today. It may be that more money is being spent per child on education today because better standards are being reached, though observation does not lend much support to this thesis. Teachers' salaries and building costs have risen alarmingly, and would have created problems even if all children were in community schools. The Catholic case is that their children have to be educated somewhere, and that they are simply asking for freedom of choice and even paying some of the building costs themselves. But this argument cannot conceal the fact that duplication (or multiplication, where other sects are involved) of facilities is wasteful in terms of construction, staffing and transport, and would be absurd if every ideological group in the community were to demand the same privileges. With a debit balance of payments and a £1,000 m. loan still to pay off, the country simply cannot afford to squander money in this way.

But there are social and educational arguments yet more important. Not simply that religion is a minority interest which most people regard as old-fashioned and irrelevant, if not actually superstitious. Not only—and this is more important—that Roman Catholic aided schools are homes of other things than outmoded theology: hellfire neurosis, sexual neuroses, suspicion of cultural freedom and scientific method, illiberal sociology, deprivation of personal responsibility leading to a disproportionate amount of

crime and delinquency. There are those who say that the above results are so undesirable that Catholic schools should not be allowed to function. Secularists say simply that they do not wish to prohibit various forms of private education, but that society must not give highly questionable forms of such an institution the official approval of subsidy.

There is yet another reason, much publicised of late and presumably known to the Government. Never before have we been so conscious of the effect on adult thought of juvenile conditioning. Never before have we been so conscious of the inimical effects of segregation on the basis of race or colour. The Rangers-Celtic fighting in Glasgow last year led to an inquiry which clearly established the sectarian nature of the hostility. Where and when does this start? It has been established beyond a reasonable doubt that the segregation of children according to creed is the initiation of adult xenophobia. Children who rarely meet in a normal social way develop the most irrational and hostile attitudes to "rival" groups, attitudes which often persist at the unconscious or preconscious level in later life. It is astonishing that a Government which is concerned about the segregation of children in grammar schools according to 11-plus intellect, and in public schools according to social class of parents, should further subsidise segregation according to the most mischievous division of all—the credal opinions of their parents.

Not only is this action contrary to general secular trends in this country, it is contrary to world trends in this field. In the United States the Methodist Bishops are standing firm against subsidy to church schools and tax exemption for churches is being fought up to the Supreme Court. In Quebec, Canada, many church exemptions have recently been lost, and plans are under way to integrate Protestant and Catholic English-language schools. Said the principal of an integrated school: "The bugbears imagined by some have simply not materialised. . . . It is definitely in the interests of the children we teach. . . . 'Do it! You won't regret it.'"

What then is the reason for the present crisis here? One reason is the position of the parties and the rumours of a general election, where a minority vote might be crucial. Another is the co-operation in lobbying the minister shown by the Catholic, Anglican and Free Churches. Another—alas—is the disarray of the Humanist movement.

Promises of collaboration have simply not materialised. A tiny group of Humanists is so concerned to be well thought of in the ecumenical movement, so busy sitting down with and being outmanoeuvred or persuaded by

Christians, so anxious to dash round Europe meeting representatives of the Vatican, that they have neither time nor inclination to pursue the instructions of their own rank and file in a matter of vital concern to the future of rationalism and progress. Were they engaged in building Humanists schools and seeking State subsidies for them, or investigating the field of ethics, or implementing social

projects, this would at least be an arguable activity—though Secular Humanists might question whether it was enough in itself or showing the right emphasis to reform and the Welfare State—for Ethical Humanists to pursue. But waffle with associates and horse-dealing with presumptive rivals will see freedom slowly broaden down from superstition to superstition.

WILLIE

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM, who died at his home in the South of France on December 16 last, aged ninety-one, had possibly produced his best work a very long time ago; certainly the Theatre saw his exit during the same year as Hitler seized power in Germany, when his last play, *Sheppey* (1933), was produced at Wyndhams because, as its author then said, he had lost touch with modern audiences. *Sheppey* was only a moderate success at the time and followed the first production in the West End of the magnificent *For Services Rendered* (1932). The latter, a grave and intensely serious play written straight from the heart, was possibly Maugham's biggest failure in the theatre; it is certainly his biggest—in conception, theme and execution. It would be impertinent to "gild the lily" by attempting to improve upon the miles of newsprint already devoted to Maugham since his death in the form of tributes, recollections, re-assessments and obituaries, but I think that many of the critical "Establishment" have missed an important aspect of his life's work in overlooking his rare gift to the Theatre in the uncommercial but powerful, last dramas he wrote in the Thirties. Pieces like *The Unknown*, *Sheppey*, and of course, *For Services Rendered* will endure when so much else has vanished with a bygone age; plays like these will bear constant revival because they mirror the lives of real people, who talk and behave like real people, however unhappy the talk and sick the behaviour might be. Everything published about the man since his departure, when seen through the eyes of such critics as Connolly and Muggerridge, concerns the writer as man, gay playwright and novelist of serious themes. But to the best of my knowledge literally nobody has troubled to recollect the dramatist who conjured up with his mind—if not with his heart—such heartbreaking themes as those to be found in his last cycle of plays. Certainly he *had* to write *For Services Rendered*, if only to expose the horrors of war and have his say in a play closely resembling in its elements modern Greek tragedy. He was compelled to utter in play form against Money, and this he did with rare feeling, allied to brilliant stage craft, in *Sheppey*. Many years earlier, of course, he had written *The Unknown* (1920), a conflict between two people; the one possessed of a simple piety and the other the loser of religious faith. Maugham was to write later that he was surprised to find this play, in which his two characters loved each other but were divided by opposing beliefs, was lost in performance because "to my surprise it appeared in representation that the drama lay in the arguments on one side and the other, and not at all in the personal relations of the characters". It is in the second act of *The Unknown* that one of the best theatrical "exchanges" in modern English drama takes place:

Vicar: The war is terrible. Its cruelty is terrible. The suffering it has caused is terrible. There is only one explanation

for it; and that is the loving kindness and the infinite mercy of our heavenly Father.

John: Can you bring yourself to believe that?

Vicar: We were given over to drunkenness and lust, to selfishness and flippancy and pride. It needed this tremendous trial to purify us. It will be a nobler England that comes out of the furnace. Oh, I pray to God that all this blood may wash our souls clean so that we may once more be found worthy in His sight.

Mrs. Poole: Amen.

John: You must evidently know much more about it than I do. When the men in my company did things I thought were wrong I used to jolly them a bit. I fancy I got better results than if I'd bashed them on the head with a sledge hammer.

Vicar: Sin began with the beginning of the human story and has continued through all its course. The motive of the divine redemption lies in the fact that men, though created for so lofty a purpose, have plunged so deep into sin and have so deeply defaced in themselves the image of God, that only the self sacrificing act of God in redeeming them can raise them from ruin.

John: I wish you'd been a company-commander and had seen how gaily a man can give his life for his friend.

Vicar: But I know, my dear boy, I know. And do you think God will be unmindful of their sacrifice? I pray and believe that they will find mercy in His sight. I am sure He is more ready to pardon than to punish. After all, our Lord came to call sinners to repentance, and who should know better than the Ministers of God that to err is human, to forgive, divine?

Mrs. Littlewood: And who is going to forgive God?

Mrs. Wharton (with horror): Charlotte!

Vicar (with grave disapproval): Don't you think that is rather blasphemous?

Mrs. Littlewood (quietly and deliberately at first, but with ever-increasing excitement): Ever since I was a child I've served God with all my might, and with all my heart, and with all my soul. I've tried always to lead my

Peter Cotes

life in accordance with His will. I never forgot that I was as nothing in His sight. I've been weak and sinful, but I've tried to do my duty.

Mrs. Wharton: Yes, dear, you've been an example to us all.

Mrs. Littlewood (*taking no notice*): Honestly, I've done everything I could that I thought was pleasing in His sight. I've praised Him and magnified His name. You've heard that my husband deserted me when I'd borne him two children, and I was left alone. I brought them up to be honest, upright and God-fearing men. When God took my eldest son I wept, but I turned to the Lord and said: "Thy will be done". He was a soldier, and he took his chance and he died in a good cause.

Vicar: A great and a good cause.

To which the worthy Mrs. Littlewood replies at the end of a longish speech defending her newly discovered rational position:

I wouldn't treat a dog as my Father has treated me. I've been cheated. You say that God will forgive us our sins, but who is going to forgive God?

And so on and so forth and much further. As far, in fact, as Pinter, Osborne and others were taking us nearly a quarter of a century later in the way of the humanist argument being heard on the West End stage. Maugham wrote so much that was trivial in the theatre but he never wrote a bad play. Both *Landed Gentry* and the gloriously funny anti-clerical farce *Loaves and Fishes*, neither of which their author has included in his editions of *Collected Plays*, are stunning comedies and comparatively little known. They will surely be revived in the years to come by a National Theatre keen to exploit Maugham at his comic best, displaying as they do an irony that almost amounts to a philosophy. Many of the other plays, with such notable exceptions as *The Sacred Flame*, *The Circle* and possibly *The Breadwinner*, are frequently trite, shallow and superficial. In fact his work in the theatre reflected much that was the man behind the artist; on the one hand, it is said by those who knew him well, kind, sympathetic, over compassionate, and a good listener; on the other hand hard, cynical, self-indulgent and inordinately proud of worldly possessions.

But whatever the man's limitations there was never any doubt about the artist. He was a born storyteller—this was noted as far back as *Liza of Lambeth* (1897)—with such novels as *Of Human Bondage* (1915) his most famous *Cakes and Ale* (1930), regarded by many as his best, will live, without a doubt, as long as the printed word is read. He was a skilled practitioner in the art of concocting a short story and many volumes testify to his eye for detail, gift of narrative, and ability to set down short sharp succinct sentences of impeccable prose. *The Gentleman in the Parlour* was a travel book containing perhaps more of the writer in a series of essays of information than anything else written in his lifetime; linked as they are by the strongest personal feeling to be found in his work. It has been said by some that much of the essential Maugham, tender, humble, simple, and with "heart" most cleverly disguised, is to be found by all those who knew him even slightly but whether one was the better and fuller for knowing *him* remains for others to judge.

His nephew, Robin Maugham the novelist, once showed me an inscription in a novel he had been given by his Uncle, which I could only regard as wry and sardonic. Whilst Beverley Nichols, who admired the writer greatly, tells amusingly of Maugham's stricture that he "wrote carelessly". This, said Nicols, "has a cramping effect upon one's style, even when accompanied by other and more inspiring remarks. Maugham's eyes seemed to be upon me, and they are extraordinary eyes; 'long distance' eyes, I might call them".

Curiously enough one of his best known plays was not written by him. Maugham wrote *Miss Thompson*, that famous conflict between the parson and the tart which was later retitled *Rain*, and finally from this short piece came the many film versions of the tale adapted from John Colston's play. Looking back I think that many of Maugham's other novels could also have been adapted for the theatre because so many of them contain, like his plays *The Sacred Flame*, *Mrs. Dot*, *Lady Frederick*, *Our Betters*, *The Letter* and countless others, such wonderful parts for women.

My own association with Maugham was not negligible. Apart from appearing as an actor in both *The Circle* and *The Breadwinner*, I also produced the first London revivals of the humorous *Loaves and Fishes* and the tragic *For Services Rendered*. In both plays Joan Miller gave two beautifully made-to-measure performances in vastly dissimilar roles parts originally created by Ellis Jefferies as a wealthy widow of Mayfair, ca. 1912, and Flora Robson as an obsessed and neurotic "county" spinster after the First World War.

Maugham is wonderful to produce in the theatre and his director derives as much satisfaction from his characterisation as his reader does from his master story-telling. Certainly a writer of consummate artistry and remarkable output, whom it will be difficult to replace, has been lost to the world. Throughout his life a rationalist, Maugham's funeral was private. It is reported that on his last visit to Singapore, when he was making a sentimental journey to the Far East in 1959 to all those places which had provided him with so much material for his most colourful stories, he said, "I don't think I can go on much longer. When the day death comes to take me away, I shall go willingly. If you are small, death may quite likely overlook you." And years earlier to introduce *The Narrow Corner* (1932), Somerset Maugham quoted: "*Short, therefore, is man's life and narrow is the corner of the earth wherein he dwells*". Maybe it is merely apt to end a brief recollection of such an outstanding writer with these very words.

NATIONAL SEGULAR SOCIETY CENTENARY DINNER

Speakers:

BRIGID BROPHY MICHAEL FOOT, MP
LORD WILLIS DAVID TRIBE

THE HORSE SHOE HOTEL
TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, LONDON, W.1

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26th,

ALL TICKETS SOLD

THIS WORLD

Danilo Dolci

AT a press conference in London last week, the celebrated Italian humanist Danilo Dolci gave a progress report on his work in Sicily. Since 1952 he has been based on Partinico, near Palermo in the West, playing a "social and educational" role among some of the poorest, most fear-ridden peasants in the world. Not least of their problems has been the politico-gangster organisation of the Mafia, suspected of over 500 murders since the last war.

THE overtly criminal activities of the Mafia have been curbed by strong police action recently, but the political power remains. Signor Dolci sees 4 types of politicians implicated: (1) those who barter votes for favours, (2) those who cash in on Mafia banditry, (3) *mafiosi* themselves elected, (4) those hostile to but forced to adapt to the system. The politicians are increasingly seeking Cabinet posts in the national Government. Many candidates secure votes through the influence of the local Catholic Church. Most of the clergy are sympathetic to the Mafia and in one district the local archbishop is brother "in every sense of the word" to the head of the Mafia; but there is a "courageous minority" which opposes the network.

DOLCI explains the fact that he is still alive to his insignificance when he started work, followed by a sudden blaze of international publicity which would now cause too great an outcry if he were to disappear. A small proportion of the population is very friendly, a small proportion very hostile, and the majority waiting to see which side will win. Immigration from the mainland has brought in people with a different standard of living who are gradually making the local peasants more anxious to attend the medical and agricultural centres now being opened. The Danilo Dolci Trust (29 Great James Street, London, WC1) has always emphasised the development of self-help among the Sicilians.

ON September 22, 1965 Sig. Dolci presented material to the Anti-Mafia Parliamentary Commission (set up largely in response to his exposures) and released some of it to the press. This has involved him in two law cases. When he returns to Italy after his current lecture-tour, on March 15 he will face the hearing of a libel action brought by Signor Bernardo Mattarella, formerly Christian Democrat Minister for Foreign Commerce in the Moro Coalition Government, whom he has accused of being elected with the help of the Mafia. After the hearing he will be prepared to say to what extent there is police collusion with the Mafia in the country.

The Gifted Child

UNDER this heading *New Education* (January) drew attention to the virtually neglected psychological problems of a student type generally thought to be problem-free, the really gifted child, who may be held back, resented, or be a juvenile absent-minded professor. In the same issue the father of one infant prodigy, Mr James Thompson, is quoted as saying that unusual performance is possible in most children if teachers do not see themselves as authorities always to be believed, but as experts on hand to help when needed.

Censorship

THIS subject has been much in the news of late. The English Stage Society, a theatre club, is being prosecuted for performing *Saved* at a time when Michael Foot, MP is seeking to remove even plays in public theatres from the sensitive blue pencil of the Lord Chamberlain. While one Russian critic of the Government performs in Eng-

land, two other writers are sentenced to seven and five years' confinement respectively and a fourth is arrested. The General Secretary of the British Communist Party, the French and Italian Communist newspapers, and even Dr. Arnold Kettle, leading British exponent of the "social obligations" of writers, all condemn the Russian action. A Polish professor writes a book emphasising the need for liberty and self-expression even in countries where theoretically the common man is in control and "has nothing to complain about". The President of the news service of America's CBS network resigns when George Kennan's criticisms of US policy in Vietnam are replaced by Lucille Ball's scatty witticisms.

HUMANISTS will generally endorse these criticisms of censorship wherever it may occur. No social system, no political theory, no economic practice is foolproof or perfectly adapted to the psychological needs of all citizens. With the proviso that children must be protected, libertarians do not wish to see any penalty of opinion or expression whether it be the writing of *avant-garde* plays (even if tasteless) or the criticism of governments (even if done *incognito*, overseas and hypocritically).

Church Assembly

IN the *Alternative Services* that the Church Assembly has approved, man is not conceived and born in sin, and does not languish in the miseries of a sinful world under the burden of sin, and look forward to the speedy accomplishment of the number of elect and the hastening of the kingdom. The fire that never shall be quenched has become the place of the departed, though its geography is as remote as ever. With an annual income approaching £50m., this world doesn't look as bleak as heretofore.

BELATEDLY the Assembly is now prepared to approve the 1928 Easter Act to fix Easter. It was reported as being anxious to sound out the opinion of other Christian churches. Little if any concern seems to have been shown over the wishes of the non-Christian majority of the population. They are certainly likely to agree, while pointing out that a fixed date will have no effect on the historicity or otherwise of putative event.

Holy Howling

UNDER the title "Is it time to banish holy howling from the schools?", Eric Kinton gave a telling and comprehensive review of *Religion and Ethics in Schools* (South London Press, February 8). On the question of social morality Mr Kinton observed: "Ignorance of the law is no excuse for crime, but children are not taught the laws of our own land—over 4,000 of them, covering areas of life that Moses never knew in his 10 archaic Commandments." of the right to be withdrawn from RI and worship. "How many are, in practice? Last time I asked a headmaster at a State school he said such 'exhibitionism' is unknown. It was hardly a tribute to RI when he added that everyone knows the ritual system is eyewash, and not worth making a scene about."

Rational Immigration

THE Action Committee for a Rational Immigration Policy is drawing up a Blue Paper to replace the Government's White Paper *Immigration from the Commonwealth*. It will recommend that there be no fixed ceiling for numbers, but that immigrants should be encouraged to go to certain areas where they could best be absorbed. Humanity should be shown in the matter of relations who wished to join families already here. Students should be allowed to stay for the full period of their studies, and able to stay for 3 months seeking to find a place where none had been secured before entry. Uniform provisions should apply to all immigrants, including Irish.

FREETHINKER

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SUSTENTATION

Despite rising costs the FREETHINKER is making valiant efforts to hold its price at the traditional 6d. This can be done only with the help of a greatly increased circulation and donations from those who can afford it. Please help all you can.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.

Manchester Branch NSS (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.

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

INDOOR

Bristol Humanist Group (Kelmescott, 4, Portland Street, Clifton), Sunday, February 27th, 7.15 p.m.: JIM LITTLE, "Why I am not a Humanist".

Havering Humanist Society (Harold Wood Social Centre, Gubbins Lane), Tuesday, March 1st, 8 p.m.: Any Questions on Humanism and other topics.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, February 27th, 6.30 p.m.: DAVID COLLIS, "Religion and Sex".

Marble Arch Branch NSS (Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, February 27th, 7.30 p.m.: BRUCE SINCLAIR, "Six Weeks in the USA" (Illustrated).

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, February 27th, 11 a.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, "Religion and Social Dissent in the USA"; March 1st, ACURLA WILLIAMS, "Intelligence—a New Evaluation".

Worthing Humanist Group (Morelands Hotel, The Pier), Sunday, February 27th, 5.30 p.m.: SUSAN BUDD, "The British Secular Movement—a Historical Survey".

West Ham and District Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead Green, London, E.11), Meeting every 4th Thursday in the month at 8 p.m.

NO COMMENT

"An analysis of the voting on the second reading of Mr Humphry Berkeley's Bill to reform the law on homosexual offences shows . . . 107 votes cast against the Bill were made up of 97 Conservatives and 10 Labour MPs. These 10 were all trade unionists except Sir Eric Fletcher, the Minister without Portfolio responsible for law reform and a well-known evangelical Anglican"—*Observer*, February 13.

"The Iowa State Supreme Court has decided that Harold Painter, aged 34, a writer, is not a fit person to bring up his son, Kark, aged 7, because he is too 'bohemian'. . . .

The Supreme Court ruled that Mr. Painter was likely to provide an environment 'too unstable, unconventional, arty, bohemian, and probably intellectually stimulating,' for the boy's good. It added that the father was 'either an agnostic or atheist and a political liberal'"—*Guardian*, February 11.

SWANENG HILL SCHOOL

Don Baker

Bechuanaland

THE territory, which achieves its independence this year (1966) and will then be known as the Republic of Botswana, has been a British Protectorate since towards the end of the nineteenth century. Bechuanaland is about three times the size of Britain but has a population of only about half a million. It is a very poor country where widespread famine is almost a yearly occurrence. However, given assistance to enable the people of Bechuanaland to help themselves, it should be possible for them to grow crops much more effectively than at present and thereby to drive away the spectre of regular famine.

A very important way of helping these people to help themselves improve is to increase the educational facilities of the country. This is what Swaneng Hill School is doing.

Meeting a Need

In Britain, where education is available to all and is even sometimes resented and resisted by the pupils, it is almost impossible to realize the eagerness with which children in some other parts of the world strive to obtain education.

In Bechuanaland it is only the lucky few who manage to get places in one of the nine secondary schools. Rather more than 2,000 pupils who have completed their primary schooling compete for the 600 available secondary school places.

Had it not been for the existence of Swaneng Hill School there would have been about 100 fewer places for those eagerly wanting secondary education.

The Origin of Swaneng Hill School

It was money sent to Swaneng Hill School by British Humanists in December 1962 that made it possible for the school to be opened in February 1963.

The founders of the school, Liz and Patrick van Rensburg, arrived in Bechuanaland in May 1962, hoping to be allowed to start a school. While they waited for permission from the Government to do this, and for a grant of land from the Bamangwato Tribe, they taught in one of the primary schools of Serowe.

At the end of September 1962, the Tribe gave a large plot of land for the establishment of the school at Serowe, and in December Government permission was given. At this time the site was covered by a forest of thorn trees and bushes.

Swaneng Hill School opened on February 11, 1962 with one classroom (now the library) and 29 pupils.

I taught arithmetic, biology and history at Swaneng from August 1963 until the end of November 1964, and during this time a great deal of development took place.

Now the school has eight classrooms and a laboratory in addition to the original classroom. Also dormitories have been built to accommodate the girl and boy boarders and there are a number of buildings in which the staff live.

School Policy

At Swaneng Hill School the notion that education is just a ladder to obtain privilege is discouraged.

(Continued on page 64)

TELLY-GO-ROUND

Peter Cotes

THERE was a time not so very long ago when debates on any important issue seen on the telly were, for the most part, sham fights. The adversaries apparently were nearly always carefully chosen to behave with gentlemanly, or occasionally ladylike, decorum. When one of the team broke through and failed to "toe the line" of cautious discussion, it was always possible for the directors of such programmes to switch the camera and shift the microphone off that "offender" who was bringing his own freely expressed and sometimes heretical point of view into the argument. Now, however, there are not so many "Daniels" having to stand alone, and for this break with stale ideas and rigid conventions the original BBC programme **That Was The Week That Was**, overpraised though it was, should receive gratitude from those of us who view television as an important modern communication, not only for escapist entertainment but enlightenment as well. Too long has a television licence been used as an instrument for keeping us enslaved to a sort of Universal Kiddie Eentertainer, an idiot's lantern, specially designed for those mentally aged 10, whom the Powers That Be are determined to keep that way. The telly chiefs continue to serve up dishes of **No Hiding Place** 'tecs, **Dock Green** bobbies, **Danger Men** and **Juke Box Juries**, not to mention such infantile pop groups as the **Ready Steady Go** coffee bar society. However, the truly grown-up of any age—and this goes for all bright kiddies—feel suitably rewarded when they can watch and hear truth rather than half-truth, and should it be pleaded in mitigation that the downright lie is "escapism", then I say: Give 'em Grimm's Fairy Tales.

There are, alas, still some VIPs (*not* programme planners) who treat the telly goer with a rare condescension, managing to make unimportant and trivial all subjects they are called upon to discuss. We were treated to a couple of such performances recently when A. J. P. Taylor, who should have known better, and Orson Welles on the *Late Night London* show (ITV) were quizzed on such varied and interesting subjects as the late Bernard Shaw, the present Charlie Chaplin and the future Bomb. Amidst much forced laughter and throw-away lines, delivered in a facetious spirit by the two combatants, who seemed to be at one in their points of view, the flippant hot air engendered took us right back to those bad old days when learned dons, famous film stars and important politicians would all hog the limelight and we'd be treated to more noise than good sense, more self-importance than sensibility, by so many of those taking part, in allegedly serious discussions over the air. But in the days of TV's free speech Michael Foot was always a notable exception to the above rule. His clear mind, ability to marshal facts lucidly, and moral courage never deserting him, however big the battalions ranged against him, he was to all intents and purposes unaware of his medium; a natural talker who was interested in his subject and passionately concerned to see that justice was done to what he believed in. He wasn't in awe of the "set-up" and refused to believe, unlike so many of those who appeared with him, in his own publicity.

We saw Foot in action the other night once more. Debating with Norman St. John Stevas, one of the more liberal-minded Tories in the present House, on the function of the Monarchy. This was **BBC3** at its best. Foot pulled no punches (neither did his opponent for that matter) and fairly and squarely placed the blame for so

much in royalty-worship on the shoulders of religion. It was an intellectual punch-up on a subject which would have been difficult to ventilate even a few years ago. Because of it, a lot of nonsense in the same programme could be forgiven. Difficult not to squirm, though, at that sketch about radiation and mention of Hiroshima. This was comedy in the wrong context. I would employ the description "tasteless" as one fitted to meet the case, but other words more vehement are doubtless more appropriate. But if the sketches strain for effect, Miss Baron—successor to the Misses Martin and Bron—is both tasteful and ornamental. Moreover, the girl has talent. A rare combination in a dish.

Earlier in the week (ending February 5) we had been treated to a very different type of confrontation on **Dateline** (commercial). Bob Pitman, philosopher-extraordinary of the *Daily Express*, was matched against Louis Blom-Cooper, the criminologist. In a no-holds-barred match the contestants would permit no joking at any price. This was a relief after Messrs. Welles and Taylor. They were debating whether there had been an increase in crime and not troubling to conceal their feelings. One could feel a bristling sincerity being emitted from the box. Pitman is an emotional chap and, although I rarely agree with his point of view, I am nevertheless always impressed by the burning force of his convictions. He is no "sail-trimmer". Even though he says, apparently, what is calculated to appeal to his readership in print, he is nevertheless triumphantly himself on television. His opponent—factual, quiet and sometimes despairing in the face of the opposing onslaught—was no match against Pitman's "Niagara" of talk. Personally I would have enjoyed an extended programme from these two on the same subject; but rather in a lecture hall, where Pitman's readers, and readers of this paper and the like, could have foregathered to listen thoughtfully before cheering their respective favourites on to greater glory.

The **D. H. Lawrence** plays (Granada) are the best of their kind to be seen for a long time and reflect considerable credit on the drama department. The producers have captured with fidelity the atmosphere of the "townies" who inhabit each story. Those to which I refer are **The Blind Man**, **Monkey Nuts** and **Tickets Please**, and all were produced, directed and adapted with immense imagination. In one of the shorter pieces, John Franklin-Robbins gave a beautiful little picture of an old soldier from the first world war. Mr. Franklin-Robbins is one of a handful of comparatively youthful actors who can skilfully portray middle-aged men with conviction. There is no suspicion of crêpe hair and studio make-up with him. Out of his frequent appearances of late on the small screen, I doubt whether any of his other performances, even that of the Narrator in the much-lauded television **War and Peace** a few years back, has ever been better than his portrait here in the quiet and moving little tale of two soldiers and a farm girl.

Panorama's edition on cancer dealt entirely with this dread disease in which the "conspiracy of silence" has proved down the years the greatest obstacle to doctors' treating the cause in time. That there are cures was clearly shown; patients having a clear duty, once the "tell-tale signs" have been discovered to consult their doctor. In every way this was a sound and informative programme with a sense of balance and just that avoidance of over-

statement by James Mossman (standing to narrate and not sitting in the chair vacated by Dimpleby, in whose memory the programme was screened); so much a feature of the best **Panorama** programmes in the golden days of Norman

Swallow. David Dimpleby, the son of Richard, introduced this special edition, which, because of its reasonableness and exposure of both fear and mumbo-jumbo, can only serve to do good wherever it is shown.

THIS FREEDOM

He who roars for liberty
Faster binds a tyrant's power.

THESE lines of Tennyson have often recurred to me. History reeks of examples of the brutal hypocrisy that must have inspired the great Victorian poet's couplet. To-day I find it frequently proclaiming the mournful truth that the primitive instinct to tyrannise has not been civilised out of humanity, and that the rights of the unprivileged are still largely proscribed.

The United States of America proudly declares herself tyranny's greatest foe and the greatest champion of freedom. But the tyranny she hates is of a special brand. She has repeatedly interfered in the internal wars of small states in her ostensible support of freedom, and helped one belligerent party to defeat another. With troops and armaments she has restored to power the régime which was in danger of being overthrown or had been overthrown—when that régime was anti-democratic. In each and every case the freedom she has striven to preserve has been the freedom to rule despotically. No consideration of whether revolts were caused through the people's genuine grievances has influenced her actions. All risings, save those attempted by supporters of an overthrown dictatorship, have been regarded as communist-inspired, her fear of communism so perverting her judgment that she has come to class the upheavals of the downtrodden as criminally subversive, and as such to be crushed wherever possible. She roars for freedom but sees no meaning in it for those struggling to throw off the shackles of authoritarian rule.

Tyrant power is also exemplified in Rhodesia. Whilst insisting on full enjoyment of the privileges they have extracted from the country, the white settlers insist that the vastly more numerous native population shall remain without privileges or the chance of gaining them. In other words, they deny Africans effective legislative representation and adequate educational facilities, severely curtail their opportunities for enrichment, and contrive their almost entire exclusion from administrative posts. Not only so, but laws to preserve this state of things are harshly enforced, the prisons containing many political offenders. Rhodesia roars for liberty—to pursue the way of life the whites have arranged for themselves, and ensure their continued domination over the immense black majority.

In defence of their repressive policy, the white settlers point out that they have made the country what it is, providing the brains and money for the development of industry and commerce, and being responsible for the great organisation that has turned a savage territory into one of scientific progress and modern amenities. They say that they have done what the coloured people couldn't, and that by greatly raising their standard of life have conferred on them a sufficient benefit. To give them voting equality would be to vote themselves out of government, forfeit the privileges their capital and brains have earned, and institute a reign of coloured oppression.

That such could be the case is feasible, but the white Rhodesian, in guarding against it, has transcended the bounds of reason by refusing to admit his black brother's

moral right to share the proprietorship of the rich resources of his native land. Thus he nourishes the very animosity he fears. Recognition of the rightful aspirations of the coloured people, and the offering of the hand of compromise would do much to obviate the conditions dreaded by the whites in the event of a native accession to power. The exact opposite has been the case, and with Rhodesia's declaration of independence, the iron fist has been finally bared. Once more the pigment bias has triumphed, and the white man's deep-seated prejudice has slammed the door on his dark-skinned brother's reasonable ambitions.

I must confess that I do not love "blacks". I am incapable of fondness for those whose physiognomy is of the negroid type, even amongst my own countryfolk. Their dusky prototypes affect me even less agreeably. Yet I would not consciously offend them, nor deny them the right to enjoy the amenities I do. I would accord them every educational facility, in order to place them on equal terms with white people and promote the spirit of brotherhood essential to their occupation of highly responsible posts, even those of government.

It would, of course, be foolish to equate our position in Britain with that of Rhodesia, in regard to coloured inhabitants, but the fact obtrudes that Ian Smith's régime intends to keep a fuedal grip on its great black majority, in this age of democratic progress. She demands liberty to achieve her ambitions, and denies her native population any chance of achieving theirs in the foreseeable future.

Like the freedom-vaunting United States, Rhodesia is a Christian country. God and Jesus are worshipped in that Land of Promise. The gentle Nazarene is revered as the supreme example of brotherly compassion and pattern for all humanity. His precepts, however, are not regarded as concerning the Rhodesian way of life. To Cecil Rhodes's successors they are purely figurative. Any other notion wouldn't do. What would become of their properous plantations, lucrative mines and fine residences if they allowed Christ to interfere with their ideas? The stupid coloured folk would come in for better education and a reasonable share of the profits from the sources of enrichment that abound in the land which was theirs long before the white man set foot upon it. They might even have a say in the governing of it and, to a large extent, gain release from their status of servants of the white settlers.

What wonder that secularists burn with indignation at the hypocrisy of religious states that pursue cruelly materialistic aims, that are loud in liberty-loving professions whilst treading down with iron heel their political and ideological opponents?

The Free thought banner must never be allowed to droop. Ours is a world-saving cause, and we should fight tooth and nail to acquire the power to disseminate our ideals everywhere and shame humanity into realisation of the imbecility of belief in gods, the hypocrisy of the religions, and the suffering of the unprivileged at the hands of those who insult their Christ and, in the words of the immortal Tennyson, bind their human brethren with a tyrant's power.

F. H. Snow

SWANENG HILL SCHOOL

(Continued from page 61)

In a country so short of capital for development far more can be achieved with the limited resources if people can be persuaded to give their labour voluntarily for the construction of such essentials as schools, dams and roads.

The pupils of Swaneng have been prepared to work voluntarily in helping to build their own school. They built their own laboratory and are now building what will be the workshop. Also an old dam within the school grounds has been rebuilt by the girls and boys. All the members of the staff help in this work too.

Recent Developments

A secondary night school has been started—a most important need for many who have ability but cannot attend day schools to obtain qualifications. Also thirty young men who were unable to obtain school places or find work when they completed their primary education, have formed a builders' brigade. They give their labour in exchange for food, building instruction and about two hours' teaching a day in general subjects. These lads have already built their own classroom in Serowe and their labour will be used for public works such as building additional classrooms for existing schools.

How you can help

You can help by sending a donation to either the school:

Swaneng Hill School,
P.O. Box 101,
Serowe,
Bechuanaland,
Africa.

or to me at 14, Glamis Drive, Hornchurch, Essex, and I will ensure that it goes to the school.

Another way of helping both the school and the people of Bechuanaland is to send parcels of discarded clothing, which is still in reasonable condition, to the school. It is quite expensive to send such parcels, but the clothing, which is sold at periodic sales, fetches far more than it would at a jumble sale in England and it provides clothing for people who find it almost impossible to buy new clothing.

LETTERS

Agnostic or Atheist?

THE ARGUMENTS between Atheists and Agnostics seem to involve a confusion between two aspects—are the terms (1) true or false and (2) desirable or undesirable. That is, the two aspects of intellectual and emotional appeal should be disentangled and discussed separately.

Personally, I think that from the intellectual angle Atheism comes out on top, but that from the emotional angle Agnosticism has a greater appeal—at least to some people. Since the intellectual side is the one usually debated let us consider the emotional side here.

We live in a society where religion and politics, because they involve human desires, arouse emotional feelings of love and hate, etc. Atheism, to the religious man, implies that when he attends church he prays to a void—to the great almighty Nothing. Agnosticism, on the other hand, at least gives the same man the idea that he might be praying to Something, and thus he feels less ridiculous, and feels less animosity towards the Agnostic than towards the Atheist. The Agnostic, by blunting the truth, also blunts the animosity of his opponents even though doubt is still fostered in the minds of the religious and the Agnostic believes in a God or gods just as little as the Atheist. A similar case exists in the advocacy of Nudism. This is a cause liable to arouse strong emotions and hostility among those opposed to it. Consequently, some practitioners prefer to talk about Naturism

rather than Nudism, although just as devoid of clothing when they get down to the bare essentials.

It is perhaps a matter of temperament and tactics. Those more sensitive unbelievers who prefer the term Agnostic should be tolerated, or, if the community is violently hostile to unbelievers, then the use of Agnosticism could be temporarily employed to avoid persecution and simultaneously foster the cause. Atheism could be used later. Whether such actions are ethical could be disputed, but it is more on these grounds than that of validity that debate could be fostered in the *Freethinker*. There is something absurd about martyrdom if nothing is really gained thereby. Galileo recanted, but his discoveries survive. On the other hand the best defence is often attack, and rather than denying God one could say that one was willing to worship the true God but "Which God?"—and produce so many gods that the Christian and his kind are driven on to the defensive, leaving the "still unredeemed, sceptical God seeker" quite immune.

D. L. HUMPHRIES (Australia)

World Peace and Esperanto

SEEING a letter under this title in *Freethinker* No. 2 from G. P. Turner, I would like to remind all Esperantists that no common language will bring peace or happiness to the world. The only language likely to improve relations between people of different races and politics is English, now taught in every secondary school throughout the world.

There is a simplified version called Britic (sh), which is as easy to learn as Esperanto and is already spoken by 500 millions. Unfortunately a large proportion are illiterate because we are too apathetic to make them otherwise. There is a very simple remedy.

CYRIL HEYES

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