

FREETHINKER

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MONEY

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has brought in a record Budget with a novel form of payroll tax directed against service and construction in favour of manufacturing industries. One form of service, that given by family and hospital doctors, has since been recognised by the Government with the promise of a third increase in money over 2 years. Angered by the proposed "early warning" legislation, the prospect of increased prices next September resulting from the Budget, and the big pay rise to doctors, the trades unions are getting restive about the Prices and Incomes Policy. Thirty-six natives have left the island paradise of Tristan da Cunha and come to Britain in search of more money.

"Money is the root of all evil" goes the saying. Alas, if true, in all social and political systems, evil prevails and seems on the increase. The days of small communistic communities trying to be self-sufficient in goods and services, sharing and sharing alike and so independent of money seem to be past. Despite the United Nations, the Common Market and EFTA, the British Commonwealth, Commicon, GATT, NATO, the Warsaw Pact and other international alliances, national economies are as firmly entrenched as ever and balance of payments crises more rather than less insistent. Despite *rapprochement*, military budgets continue to rise. Huge and increasing amounts of human energy are expended trying to get more money or dodge taxes, while at the end of the day the Inland Revenue and persistent inflation have creamed off whatever seemed to have been won.

Always it is the person on low or fixed incomes who comes off worst in the struggle. Increased costs are passed on in a way making headaches for accountants without appearing to benefit anyone. In Australia the change to decimal currency has led to new—and higher—retail prices. The Chancellor claimed his new tax was equivalent to a purchase tax of 3 to 4 per cent and should lead to less than 1 per cent increase in the cost of living. Whatever the theoretical position, men's hairdressers are already forecasting an increase from 4 to 5 shillings (25 per cent), and service stations comparably.

Some commentators have seen the preference given to manufacturing over service industries as a symbolic triumph of machines over men. Though this assessment may be too colourful, it is not without plausibility. Ostensibly the new measure is to promote exports and discourage fripperies. But as a tool for encouraging really "selective employment" it is as blunt as any hitherto devised. "Manufacturing" is a blanket word that includes home consumption as well as export products, luxury as well as essential goods. "Services" is equally vague and brackets Shakespearean actors with *croupiers*.

Secular concern

Needless to say, though "religious organisations" nominally fall under the no-rebate hammer, providentially clerks in holy orders are regarded as "self-employed" and so escape the payroll tax. One is reminded of the racket whereby parsonages, vicarages and presbyteries are defined as "charities" for rating purposes. In addition to the huge handouts for church schools, mother and baby homes and the like, religious organisations escape taxation on dividends and offerings, death duties and rates on fast proliferating ecclesiastical property. In new towns, churches are given land at a nominal cost. Not surprisingly, the Vatican is one of the richest organisations in the world and the Church of England one of the richest organisations in England. Both denominations are expected to have an annual income of £50 million in this country alone by 1980.

The new MP for Harrow East is protesting against the rating reduction for Harrow School. Old age pensioners who happen to own their own homes are subsidising snob education for the children of the affluent. **It is time the public demanded an end to the rating exemptions and other benefits enjoyed by the churches.**

CIVIL LIBERTIES

While the churches luxuriate as religious belief declines, the National Council for Civil Liberties gets ever more desperate for money as concern for civil liberties grows. Faced with rapidly increasing appeals for its services, it struggles on gallantly with an annual budget at the incredibly low figure of £8½ thousand.

Some idea of the great range and usefulness of its work will be gained from the following report by Nigel Sinnott:

The 1966 Annual General Meeting of the National Council for Civil Liberties, to which the National Secular Society is affiliated, took place at Conway Hall on Friday

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and Saturday, 29-30 April. Those present included 115 individual members of NCCL, 15 members of its Executive Committee, and 136 delegates from trades unions and other affiliated bodies.

The meeting passed a series of motions on such issues as social justice in Northern Ireland, civil rights in Rhodesia and British Guiana, broadcasting time for political and other minorities, and the withdrawal of the Government's White Paper on Immigration. It also called for more adequate investigations of complaints made

against the police, and for effective safeguards for the well-being of prisoners who were physically or mentally ill.

A motion submitted by the NSS calling for the disestablishment of the Church of England aroused considerable interest, and although opposed by the Council's Executive, it was passed by a sizeable majority; as was a motion calling for support for reform of the abortion laws.

Many tributes were paid to the Council's retiring General Secretary, Martin Ennals, and a fund-raising party was held in his honour after the final session.

TWISTED AND DISGRACEFUL

SYMPOSIUM 2

Elizabeth Collins

WHAT APPEARED in the circumstances to be perfectly legitimate criticism of certain BHA activities (FREETHINKER, February 25) hardly seemed to warrant Tom Vernon's outburst of March 18. It surely amounted to no more than plain-speaking from friends who would prefer to see Humanists flourish independently than to get caught up in the toils of Vatican diplomacy. All this talk of "dialogue" between Rome and non-Catholics means nothing more than a softening-up process in the long run.

Criticism is the life-blood of a free press in a free society, and to designate as a "smear" something one does not like to hear comes dangerously near to calling for suppression of such freedom.

As for the "practical work" of the BHA alluded to in the above letter, that has still to be evaluated in the future.

Tom Vernon states that he is a newcomer to the BHA, which is itself a relative newcomer to the Freethought-Humanist movement, although developed from older societies. The National Secular Society has behind it 100 years of active campaigning and propaganda work, which, together with the RPA's Thinker's Library and the McCabe period, has been largely responsible for the secular change in the climate of public opinion in this country.

As Tom Vernon rightly says, Freethinkers and Humanists have many aims in common. It would be better for the BHA to seek a unified front with people of like minds rather than with their opponents. For in spite of all the smooth talk now taking place, the Catholic Church has been an obstructive power, and an implacable enemy of Humanism and Freethought for centuries, and is likely to remain so.

SYMPOSIUM 2

Barbara Smoker

WHILST HUMANISTS must always oppose Roman Catholic policies that inhibit social reforms and must always be on guard against the widening of the influence of the RC Church, recent issues of the FREETHINKER have been so obsessed with Roman Catholicism as to seem almost pathologically hysterical. Some contributors to the FREETHINKER apparently react to the name Roman Catholic as right-wing extremists in the USA react to the name Communist. Some of the letters you have published in recent weeks might well have been lifted from Jehovah's Witnesses' tracts, or from something written by those two fanatical Ulster pastors who tried to accompany Dr Ramsey to Rome and whose subsequent

television interview showed to be completely irrational.

The purpose of the ecumenical movement is doubtless partly to counteract the growing Humanist movement—but this is all the more reason why Humanists too should try to remain united. No good can come from sheer abuse of the Churches, and still less from abuse of each other. From the reaction to the talks between the BHA and Vatican representatives, anyone would think that all the officers of the BHA had submitted to baptism! Diplomatic dialogues are the normal procedure between nations engaged in a cold war, and even minor points of agreement can have good social results. Besides, genuine knowledge and understanding of the enemy are far more likely to win battles than is ignorance fed upon one's own propaganda.

SYMPOSIUM 2

Arthur Francis

I PRAY that Tom Vernon does not curse your doorstep too much, for as a member of the NSS and the BHA I find my sight getting twinned.

Tom Vernon must not be dismayed when a heavy boot kicks. This boot was allayed centuries ago by the sign of the Cross, but we now live in free times for the common herd—a herd that welcomes words to the point and not taking all our weary time in trying to act as if the Royal Train is due in.

This movement of ours should have a common purpose but a purpose with a need. I'm on the FREETHINKER'S side on this issue. (I'd be just as unholy if I sided with Tom.) If one listens a little to the ground there can be found rumblings of discontent. The "clever ones" are not always giving the lead to what humanism should be about—HUMANISM. The common dog has not been told of his biscuit and it is no good having an attitude of "we know best". Why, we'll soon have to declare that there was a green hill far away after all unless a few unpopular things are said. Is not this what the movement is all about—to think?

SYMPOSIUM 2

BHA Committee

BHA Committee (H. J. Blackham (Chairman), Lindsay Burnet (Secretary), Tom Vernon (Press and Publications), Antony Chapman, Peter Draper, Michael Lines, David Pollock, Tom Chalmers, Alex Dawn, Graham T. Kingsley, George Mephram, Charles Woodward).

WE THINK that the statement "the BHA has a record of practical work and enterprise which compares more than favourably with any other humanist/secular body in this

country" is correct. It cannot be proved false without adducing the superior record of a comparable body, which none of your correspondents has attempted to do. Of course we are under no illusion that the BHA is perfect; but we think that, considering its age and resources, it is doing well, and we intend that it shall go on to do better.

We do not think that we are compromising Humanism by being unafraid to have occasional talks with some of our opponents, or support the IHEU when it does so. An altogether insignificant portion of our energy has gone on talks with Vatican representatives.

We think that there is plenty of scope for reasoned and constructive criticism within the Humanist movement, but that our efforts should mainly be directed towards the world outside.

SYMPOSIUM 2 **William Griffiths**

AS AN OLD MEMBER and officer of the National Secular Society and also a member of the British Humanist Association since its formation, I would like to remind Tom Vernon of some past history of which he is most probably unaware "as a relative newcomer to the BHA".

A few years ago there was in existence a body known as the Humanist Council, which consisted of representatives from the NSS, Rationalist Press Association and the Ethical Union. Its object was the co-operation of the three organisations for the furtherance of Secular Humanist activities in such fields as broadcasting, and secular education and social work. NSS delegates wanted to deal with opposition to family planning by the Roman Catholic Church, particularly in the Freedom from Hunger campaign. We had considerable discussion on the inactivity of the Humanist Broadcasting Council but got nowhere because we were informed that this was an independently constituted body over which the Humanist Council had no control.

Although the HC did not achieve anything spectacular during its existence, nevertheless with goodwill from all parties it could have been a very effective organisation, advancing the many aims we have in common.

Then quite suddenly the NSS was informed that RPA and the EU were joining together to form the BHA and that the HC was being disbanded. No invitation was made to the NSS to join the new organisation. The only thing promised was that there would be at least annual consultations to discuss matters of mutual interest. There has only been one meeting, at which promises were made but never realised.

It is obvious that there are influential people in the BHA who are more concerned with hobnobbing and co-operating with the Roman Catholic Church than with one of the oldest Secular Humanist organisations in the world—the NSS.

As a Secularist for over 50 years, may I appeal to all genuine Freethinkers, Secularists, Humanists and Atheists to realise that it is only by cooperation that we can become a body of people that will be heard, and whose opinions will be valued when the many social and moral problems are being considered today. It is for this reason that now the BHA is to be reconstituted, the NSS has formally sought inclusion in negotiations.

SYMPOSIUM 2 **Kenneth J. Ead**

AM I in error to belong to both the NSS and the BHA ?

Am I in the position of a religionist professing to be both Catholic and Protestant ? Surely not! Surely it is imperative that both these associations be kept alive, well supported, virile and progressively more prominent in the country's affairs. Surely the two should be bound together by their common aims of social reforms for the fuller life of humanity. Surely they should not be slating each other at a time when all the ammunition of both, and indeed more, is needed to blast down the crumbling walls of ancient irrational religion.

Whilst atheists, agnostics, secularists and rationalists are busy building up their own particular dogma, whilst the NSS and BHA are vying with each other in intellectual talk and treatises, Catholics and Anglicans are feathering their own nests with monies from the Education Fund and with young innocent minds wherewith to ensure their future policy. Far from quarrelling amongst ourselves, I believe we could learn many a tactical lesson from the churches. We could get out and preach Secularism. We could be more anti-church, we could be more dominant locally. We must move forward on our common ground with a solid front and one voice.

SYMPOSIUM 2 **Don Baker**

ONE GATHERS from recent correspondence in the FREETHINKER that there is a considerable amount of bad feeling between certain individuals in the Humanist movement.

It has to be recognised that disputes between individuals are inevitable; they happen in all movements. But I deeply regret the ill-feeling that seems to be present among correspondents in this case.

(The Editor concurs. The correspondence is closed.)

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

CENTENARY LECTURES
THE MEANING AND VALUE OF
FREETHOUGHT

Chairman: DAVID TRIBE

Friday, May 13th
FREETHOUGHT AND HISTORY
F. H. AMPILETT MICKLEWRIGHT HECTOR HAWTON

Friday, May 27th
FREETHOUGHT AND PHILOSOPHY
H. J. BLACKHAM PAUL FOULKES

Friday, June 10th
FREETHOUGHT AND SCIENCE
Dr. E. H. HUTTEN Dr. DAVID STEWART
Dr LAWRENCE KOTKAS

Friday, June 24th
FREETHOUGHT AND LAW REFORM
DIANE MUNDAY ANTONY GREY

Friday, July 8th
FREETHOUGHT AND LIBERTY
TOM SARGENT AVRIL FOX JAMES SHEPHERD
MARTIN ENNALS

Friday, July 22nd
FREETHOUGHT AND SOCIAL WORK
PETER FRYER KERSTINE RICHARDS

Friday, August 5th
FREETHOUGHT AND THE ARTS
OSWELL BLAKESTON PETER COTES JOAN MILLER
JOHN CALDER KATHLEEN EWART

Meetings commence at 7.30 p.m.
CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON, WC1

THIS WORLD

King Hill Hostel

FACED with a conflict between legalism and social justice, eviction powers of local authorities and inspection rights of the Ministry of Health, Mr Justice Browne came down firmly on the side of compromise, with a nod towards the establishment. He granted a possession order to Kent County Council against Mrs Jean Daniels and her four children, with a four weeks' stay of execution. The council had asked for almost immediate eviction.

New Look

WHEN the FREETHINKER changed its appearance at the beginning of this year, there were at first some murmurs of protest. Fancy a masthead in two colours AND CAPITALS and titles that hit you in the eye. Two weeks ago the *New Statesman*, most conservative of radical publications, came out with a new layout and type face; and with a masthead in two colours, part capitals, and titles that hit you in the eye. Worst of all, four days later the *Times* after 181 years put news on its front page and changed to a masthead IN CAPITALS. Four days earlier the *Daily Worker* died, but phoenix- or Christ-like rose again as the *Morning Star*. It too had a different layout, and a masthead in part capitals. Is nothing safe any more? THE FREETHINKER has also got away from its old preoccupations with Jesus and ecclesiastical history into the social and political concerns of the modern world. In the words of the *Times*,

Uniqueness is not a virtue if it becomes mere eccentricity. There is no future for any newspaper as a museum piece.

Its secularism has thereby emerged the stronger. *The Times* again:

There is no intention of altering the essential character of *The Times*. . . . They will continue to have the same sense of responsibility and the same standards.

Catholic Schools

FEELING about Catholic schools has been running high in Northern Ireland. Premier Captain Terence O'Neill has observed:

A major cause of the division (in Northern Ireland society) arises, some would say, from the *de facto* segregation of education along religious lines. . . . Many people have questioned, however, whether the maintenance of two distinct educational systems side by side is not wasteful of human and financial resources and a major barrier to any attempts at communal assimilation.

IN ENGLAND the 8,000-strong Catholic Teachers' Federation has given majority support to the continuance of Catholic education in secondary as well as primary schools. But opposition is growing. Cardinal Heenan himself has had to take cognisance of it. At a Catholic Education Council Conference at St Mary's, Twickenham, he was reported (*Catholic Herald*, April 29) as saying:

We must acknowledge the sombre fact that the children of the nation do not usually grow up to be worshipping Christians. Would our small flock remain the largest church-going community if we were to abandon our schools?

Rome Again

TROUBLE recently broke out in Rome after the death of a left-wing student in a clash with neo-Fascists who by strong-arm methods had come to dominate the student union. It was the culmination of unrest and strikes over the bad conditions and feudal government of Italian uni-

versities, which are under the thumb of 3,000 reactionary Professors of *Ruolo* (permanent staff). One result of the latest protest has been the resignation of the Rector of Rome University, Professor Ugo Papi, former Fascist supporter.

Catholic Action

OPUS DEI in Spain has become a principal bulwark of the Franco régime, and favours the succession of Prince Juan Carlos. In America, Father James Keller has founded the Christophers to combat Communism and advance "Christian ideals" in society. Under the guise of showing commitment and social concern—which is no doubt sincerely intended—the Church is increasing its political power and, through indirect support of its educational and welfare "services to the community", is getting round the US Constitution in securing public financial support.

Youth Home Appeal

THE IMAGINATIVE Crescent House scheme for "problem" youths is still short of £5,000. Further information may be had from and donations sent to Mr. W. A. Liddell, Projects Officer, Edinburgh Humanists, 21 Craighentiny Crescent, Edinburgh 7.

Humanist Lobby

DAVID POLLOCK has reported (*Humanist News*, May/June) that of 83 Conservative MPs and unsuccessful candidates who answered the Humanist questionnaire sent out by 120 BHA members before the last General Election, only 3 were sympathetic. Of 45 Liberals, one in four were sympathetic, but only one of the whole group was elected. Of the 30 Labour MPs elected, five favoured revision of the 1944 Act, three wanted independent moral education, and only one would resist the spread of church schools or stop the subsidy of Anglican schools in single-school areas.

Glasgow Humanist Conference

E. G. MACFARLANE reports (*Humanist Newsletter*, April) that this conference was a great success, though he regrets that some local members stayed away because of the theme, "Humanist Attitudes to Sex". Publisher John Calder concentrated on the problem of censorship, to which he has often been victim, and "gave me the impression that he regards himself as a kind of 'bridge' between churchmen and Humanists". Dr Faith Spicer regarded the approach to young mothers as the proper starting point for better views on sex, and Mrs Davidson suggested that young parents should leave the bathroom door open while they were bathing so the children could come and go in a natural way.

More on Sex

THE Simon Population Trust has just launched a scheme to promote voluntary sterilisation for men and women. At present this can be done under the NHS for therapeutic reasons only.

IN the United States Dr William H. Masters and Mrs Virginia E. Johnson's *Human Sexual Behaviour*, based largely on filmed sexual intercourse, has become a best-seller though advertised only in the medical press.

Slot Machines for Everything

STUDENTS of the Regent Street Polytechnic are advocating slot machines in the men's toilets for contraceptive

FREETHINKER

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Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

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

- Manchester Branch NSS (The Wheatsheaf Hotel, High Street), Sunday, May 15th, 7.30 p.m.: Annual General Meeting for members only.
- Progressive League (13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8), Tuesday, May 17th, 7.30 p.m.: ALFRED REYNOLDS, "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea".
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, May 15th, 11 a.m.: MAURICE CRANSTON, "Albert Camus and Existentialist Ethics".
- Thomas Paine Society, 175th Anniversary of the publication of "Rights of Man". Exhibition of books, prints, pictures, coins and pottery. Co-operative Education Centre, Heathcote Street, Nottingham. Monday, May 9th—Saturday, May 14th. First day, 7.30 p.m. to 9 p.m., other days 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- West Ham and District Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead Green, E11). Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.
- Progressive League and Plan: enquiries to 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8.
- Humanist Letter Network (International): send s.a.c. to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

THIS WORLD continued

sheaths. A report just published lists retailers in the district and relative merits of different forms of contraception.

IN Ferrara you can get God by slot machine. Just insert the "donation" and a consecrated wafer comes out.

NO COMMENT

"A new use has been found for 20 old railway guards' vans. They are being moved into the garden of a convent at Llandoverly, South Wales, where they will become cells for nuns"—*Observer*, May 1.

"Scarcely a month goes by in Poland without the claim of a miracle. Penitents will go miles on their knees through city streets. . . . Indeed the Church calls Poland 'the slave of Mary'. It is alleged, and probably true, that more than half the Polish Communist Party are church-goers, having evolved some special blend of Marxism and Mariolatry. . . . It's just like the Middle Ages when every aspect of life attached to the Church. Not only every pilgrim, but every prostitute in the country will be there"—*Sunday Times*, May 1.

CHILDREN IN FICTION

A. Wyper

WRITERS OF FICTION for the juvenile are legion. Whether they write as a means of earning a living or as escapism from the adult world or primarily because they delight in relating a tale does not matter very much, so long as they avoid talking down to the young reader and keep him enthralled from the opening paragraph.

No room for God

Should a freethinker happen to read any of the books in this field of literature it may occur to him that in many instances reference is rarely made, or never at all, to a guiding god or saviour. Children in the fictional world at any rate can evidently follow a moral path without supernatural aid.

I particularly recommend the following :

- (1) *The Story of the Amulet* by E. Nesbit (Puffin Books, 3/6).
- (2) *Auntie Robbo* by Ann Scott-Moncrieff (Puffin Books, 3/6).
- (3) *Savage Gold* by Roy Fuller (Puffin Books, 3/6).
- (4) *Raiders of Mars* by Patrick Moore (Burke Publishing Co., 2/6).
- (5) *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding (Penguin, 3/6).

In the first book some children meet a little boy named Wells.

"Why do they call him 'Wells'?" asked Robert.

"It's after the great reformer—surely you've heard of him? He lived in the dark ages, and he saw that what you ought to do is to find out what you want and then try to get it. Up to then, people had always tried to tinker up what they'd got."

In *Savage Gold* there is the following conversation :

"You have driven them off, Brown?" she said.

"For the time being."

"It is the gods we have to thank for this."

"Luck."

"The same," said Sete's aunt, with a cackle. "You know I only say these things because I was brought up to say them."

Hatred of war

Raiders of Mars presents a planet on which there are no wars, crime or money. Some survivors of a war on Earth, motivated by the desire for power and conquest indoctrinated into them when on Earth, plan to conquer Mars. The Martians find themselves having to fight evil.

"Rick gave a shudder, to him warfare was an evil thing, and he still could not believe that they were all fighting for their lives."

But what about children in the adult novel when there are no kind parents or kind guardians to look after them?

Dependence on mankind

In *Lord of the Flies* children are projected on to an uninhabited island. If the boys had said prayers, they would probably have been varied because of different temperaments, different outlooks, etc. Would they have received any answers to these prayers and what would have been the outcome? Or would there have been—silence?

There was indeed no voice to guide them. They were dependent on the human element alone, good or bad, and the good was personified in the true, wise Piggy.

WINDOW ON THE WORLD

Otto Wolfgang

LAST YEAR, when spending a holiday in the Austrian Alps, we were attracted to a knot of people who stood and looked excitedly down on the ground; some men even crouched down, and one lit a cigarette and drew on it. Suddenly my wife understood what the cause of their merriment was and jumped in their midst, shouting: "Nazi butchers you still are!"

They had caught a toad and were trying first to singe its legs with a match, then with the glowing cigarette to burn its eyes out. No wonder that reports from Yugoslavia and elsewhere were unanimous in their verdict that the worst units in the Nazi army were those mainly made up of Austrians or under Austrian officers. As devout Catholics, many Austrians are basically cruel and have always been anti-Semites; and the most controversial and violently opposed piece of legislation was that of paying up to £120 to surviving Jews whose property had been stolen and expropriated during the Hitler reign. The Austrians were ready to pay indemnification to Nazis who had "suffered" through Allied actions of *Entnazifizierung*, but not to Jews who are not considered co-nationals. And during the recent election—which ended with the victory of the Catholic "People's" Party—a former Socialist Minister of the Interior smeared his former Social Democratic opponents by alleging a Jewish origin for most of them!

War criminals

At the end of World War II there were about 550,000 registered Nazis in Austria, a higher percentage than in Germany itself. With a few exceptions, all of these Nazis—including many who were out-and-out war criminals—went unpunished. Today, in fact, only three persons are in prison in Austria for war crimes, writes *Newsweek* of March 14. A Flemish SS-man, who had been sentenced to death in Belgium, was given Austrian nationality and acquitted when put to trial in Vienna. Two Poles, now naturalized Austrians, went on trial in Salzburg last January on charges of having participated in the mass murder of Jews. However, the jury (whose foreman had been a member of the Nazi party himself) decided that all the prosecution witnesses had lied and the case was dismissed. Another war criminal, former member of Hitler's bodyguard and sentenced to death in Italy, is now a headmaster in Carinthia (*Der Spiegel*).

Culture vultures

In an anonymous letter from Spain, published in *Nouvel Observateur* (March 16-22), a description is given of how 5,000 Spaniards of the country's elite tried, on February 20, to pay homage to the memory of Machado (1875-1909), their great national poet. But if fascists hear of "culture", they immediately grip their guns. In the preceding night troops of the Guardia Civil blocked all access routes to the little village of Baeza; when the writers and artists arrived in the morning, they left their cars or motorcycles and proceeded on foot. Whereupon, a few officers of the Secret Police drew their revolvers and the policemen (partly paid with money earned from British tourists) started beating the crowd with their truncheons.

The letter concludes with these words: "In each one of these five thousand representatives of the arts, the poet Antonio Machado was battered, humiliated and wounded".

When in Rome

And yet, there are even Communists who wish to sit down with representatives of a creed whose doctrine of being God's Only Select People has engendered so many

orgies of hate. In a report from the Eleventh Congress of the Italian CP (*Der Spiegel*, December 12, 1965), it was stated that "the portraits of Karl Marx, Engels and Lenin were left in the vaults below" when the largest Communist Party in Europe proclaimed the Italian way to Socialism. "This is the situation", commented *Corriera della Sera* (Milan), "where side by side with the red flag the yellow and white banner of the Vatican is flying".

Luigi Longo quoted mainly from papal encyclicals and other Church documents to show that the Holy See and Communism in fact have common aims. And when Pietro Ingrao, leader of the left, warned against this revisionism, another CP parliamentarian shouted, "We need no revolutionary pep talk".

This, observes *Der Spiegel*, is largely the result of *la dolce vita*, when even members of the Young Communist League (who in the period between the two World Wars were hardly allowed any private life) want to own their weekend houses, record players and motor cars. In order to get what the "affluent society" has to offer, one becomes respectable and gangs up with whoever is prepared to barter ideals in exchange for power. Even the Communist press has had a bourgeois face-lift, with cheese cake, pages for hobbies, travel and fashion. And whilst—thanks to the co-existence policy of the new leaders (who, as Amendola complained, have forgotten their erstwhile revolutionary goals)—the CP votes in Italy increased from 6 to 8 million, the party membership declined from 2.1 to 1.6 million during these ten years (youth from 431,000 to 173,000).

The Pope's latest gimmicks are visits to Rome's workers, particularly trades unions with firm Communist affiliation, where he is now in no danger of counter-demonstrations. After a visit to 1,000 building workers, he went to the Communal Street Cleaning depot to address 4,000 road sweepers on the eve of their 3-day strike. The reception, including all-round handshakes, was so cordial—Rome's Communist press went hysterical with enthusiastic reports—that as a result the strike was a telling defeat for the CP, with two thirds of the cleaners not obeying the strike order (*Spiegel*, February 28).

Unsafe in the arms of Jesus

However, even the Churches are losing out. *New Christian* recently published shocking losses of Methodists, and on March 24 it was reported that the Baptists in Britain lost 6,253 members during the year 1964/65. In France the RC Church suffers an overall loss of 30 per cent per year, and Mgr Suhard wrote in *Essor ou Déclin du Clergé* (Increase or Decrease of Clergy): "In 1940, France had 4,771 parishes without priests; in 1950 there were 15,416. . . . That which is menacing the Church is not opposition but indifference". Modern man has different interests—in technical progress, sports, travel, etc; he is neither for nor against religion, he is just outside and doesn't care. However, the Vatican has concluded concordats with 4 RC states (Austria, Italy, Spain and Portugal). Now a concordat that cedes more to the hierarchy than in all these RC countries has been concluded with Lower Saxony, one of the "Protestant" *Länder* of Federal Germany (*Der Funke*, Bremen, April).

The March issue of *La Raison* nails the bluff of two Dominicans who during "Marxist Week" in Lyons, February 1963, took part in the dialogue with certain French

Communists and are now trying with seductive phrases to cause disarray in the anti-Catholic front. However, was not St Dominic very actively engaged in the sacking of the town of Béziers during the war against the Albigenses? Was he not, some twenty years before, one of the founding fathers of the Inquisition? Were not the most horrible butchers of heretics Dominicans, such as the infamous Torquemada?

The difference between religion and superstition is merely that the latter exists by tradition, whilst the former has an organization with written texts. Both are based on belief in magic. And the French article recalls that prior to the beginning of the fishing season the trawlers of La Rochelle are blessed by the Bishop. Recently it so happened that the following day, when the fishing fleet should have departed, was a Friday the thirteenth and no boat dared sail. Similarly, the new luxury liner *France* ought to have started her maiden voyage on Friday, August 13, 1965; but this had to be deferred until the Saturday. Superstition appears to be the stronger.

LOGICAL POSITIVISM AND RELIGION

John L Broom

LOGICAL POSITIVISM originated shortly after the first world war among a group of thinkers led by Professor Moritz Schlick and known as the Vienna Circle. Few systems of thought have had such a far-reaching and revolutionary influence on contemporary philosophy.

Although he never actually called himself a logical positivist, it is generally recognized that the most brilliant exponent of the school was Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), whose monumental *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was translated into English by Bertrand Russell in 1922. Wittgenstein's principal English disciple is Professor A. J. Ayer, whose famous work *Language, Truth and Logic* may now be regarded as the standard textbook of logical positivism.

Logical positivists maintain that the primary task of philosophy should not be the search after ultimate truth (which, as we shall see, they regard as a meaningless pursuit) but the analysis and clarification of meaning. Many of the problems that philosophers and theologians have been arguing about for centuries are pseudo-problems caused by a misuse of language. What is needed is a new technique or method of approach, and this logical positivism claims to supply.

Verification Principle

It is held that a proposition is meaningful only if it can be tested by sense experience. This is called the "Verification Principle". The propositions of logic and mathematics obviously cannot be tested by sense experience, but they are tautological—their subjects are included in their predicates. We see that $2+2$ must always $=4$, for the simple reason that 4 is what we mean by $2+2$. The truth of such *a priori* propositions is certain, but their truth is guaranteed solely by the rules for the use of the symbols they contain.

All propositions apart from those which are *a priori* are nonsensical unless they can be empirically verified. This principle, if true, means that all metaphysical propositions ("God exists", "the soul is immortal" and so on) are nonsensical, since none of them can be verified by sense experience. Metaphysical assertions appear to make sense

The Loved One

During the past 5 years the population of Rozzano in Northern Italy has soared from 2 to 5,000 because of the continuous influx of jobless from the south. Somehow the town council managed to house all its new residents, but the cemetery was fast running out of space. A woman architect found the solution: she designed twin skyscraper cemeteries, close to the shopping centre; each of the "cemetowers" will contain 20 floors and can accommodate 14,480 corpses in separate vaults. To visit your beloved, you just push the elevator button and get off at the proper floor and number. *Newsweek* (March 14) commented:

No more big, ugly, tear-jerking sculptures, drooping flowers, iron gratings, overgrown with weeds. Death will now become just as much a part of life as eating spaghetti.

However, tradition is stronger. "I won't die here, if they are going to put me in the air," complained one citizen. "I want a plant over my head." And the local priest does not like the idea that the body will evaporate in the towers; it must return to dust, so as to fit Holy Scripture.

because they bear a grammatical resemblance to other obviously sensible statements. But no conceivable series of observations could, for example, settle the dispute whether the essence of reality is spiritual or material. When scientists disagree, they are able to indicate the kinds of experiments which would prove or disprove their conflicting hypotheses. But theologians who disagree about, for example, how to reconcile the existence of an all-powerful all-perfect God with the fact of suffering, cannot say what sort of tests would settle the argument one way or the other. The inescapable conclusion is that the problem is not a real one; indeed to use a vivid illustration of Arthur Pap's it would be as sensible to argue about whether or not I had quadratic equations for breakfast.

Emotion not perception

If it is claimed that the truth of the proposition "God exists" can be shown by the fact of religious experience, the positivist would reply that such experiences are only indicative of the presence of certain unique emotional states. To suppose that they point to some transcendent reality is to confuse an emotion with a perception.

It follows of course from the above arguments that the proposition "God does not exist" is, like its opposite, quite meaningless. But this can hardly be of much comfort to the believer.

Undoubtedly, the logical positivists have done much to clarify our thinking by showing that many problems appeared insoluble simply because we were using words carelessly or wrongly when framing them. There are however at least two serious objections to the main conclusions of the school.

Objections to logical positivism

Firstly, the statement that all propositions in logic and mathematics are mere tautologies, while it cannot be disproved, is highly doubtful. It is by no means self-evident that the truth of such propositions is guaranteed solely by the rules for the use of the symbols they contain. Moreover, the truth of the logical principle of contradiction (which decrees, for example, that a door cannot be open

and shut at the same time) is *a priori*—it is not established by any empirical demonstration. But the principle of contradiction is absolutely basic to all our thinking, and it seems peculiar, to say the least, that if only propositions which can be tested empirically are meaningful, a non-empirical truth should lie at the very root of all our thinking and experience.

Secondly, it is obvious that the truth of the principle of verification itself cannot be tested empirically. But equally obviously, it does not belong to the order of self-evidently true logical and mathematical propositions. It therefore must be metaphysical in character and hence, according to the tenets of logical positivism, is nonsensical. So, it seems to me, the whole edifice of logical positivism crumbles when its own basic principle is applied to itself.

LETTERS

Survival of Religion

IN RESPONSE to F. H. Snow's question "How long will religion survive?" I should like to quote a passage from Arthur C. Clarke's *Profiles of the Future* (Pan Books).

In chapter eight the author discusses the possibilities of communication with intelligent beings in distant parts of the universe.

"Not all of these messages—not many, perhaps—will bring us comfort. The proof, which is now only a matter of time, that this young species of ours is low in the scale of cosmic intelligence, will be a shattering blow to our pride. Few of our current religions can be expected to survive it, contrary to the optimistic forecasts from certain quarters. The assertion that 'God made Man in His own image', is ticking like a time-bomb in the foundations of Christianity. As the hierarchy of the universe is slowly disclosed to us, we will have to face this chilling fact: if there are any gods whose chief concern is Man, they cannot be very important gods."

I agree with all that Mr Clarke says here, except for his use of the word "chilling". Surely it is anything but that!

WILLIAM A. CRAIG

Verse and Worse

PETER J. C. LESLIE and his letter, FREETHINKER, April 15, has spurred my mount into action. He should now tell us exactly what the FREETHINKER should think about and what other paper than *Private Eye* spurns more than the religion of the day. If our paper ever pleases all it will be but a parish magazine asking for broken spectacles for our starving fellow-beings.

Still, I give full credit for Peter's letter that has exceeded in satire any of the funny-stuff that he denounces; I like a laugh now and then. Then let us have a real poem, like Thomas Hood's *Ruth*—

Sure, I said, heav'n did not mean,
Where I reap thou shouldst be glean.
Lay thy sheaf adown and come,
Share my harvest and my home.

Excuse my tears.

ARTHUR FRANCIS

No Danger

MAY I SUGGEST that *The Dangerous Sex* by H. R. Hays (Methuen, 30s) is a most important book for anyone who is genuinely interested in male-female relationships. As the author writes, "It is time the male abandoned his magical approach to the second sex . . . it is time he realised the menace of the female lies within himself. And when he is ready to accept her as a partner in work and love, he may even begin to find out what she is like. Among the thousands of books written about women by men—this is different. Mr Hays writes with an obvious academic knowledge and human understanding that is too often lacking in our so-called "rationalist" misogynist snipers in the FREETHINKER.

I should like to point out to Mr Snow that if the Pope, the world priesthood, church councils and commissioners (not to mention bankers)—all male—were to abdicate tomorrow, organised religion would be dead the day after and no congregation of lonely or sexually inhibited women could resurrect it. His remark about the lack of women sceptics rings curiously in my Christian-Conservative part of the country where, if a woman is an atheist, the men consider this to be proof that she has "no critical

ability"! If personal experience were all, I would believe that men are overwhelmingly credulous and reactionary. Mr Hays, however, helps us to avoid facile generalisations and to get down to facts and reasoning. It is a splendid book.

(Mrs) KIT MOUNT

Public Opinion and Statutes

ALL FREETHINKERS and most English citizens would agree with the contention in Mr Amphlett Micklewright's article on "Dr Ramsey and the Pope" that we must guard against any encroachment of Roman Catholic dogma into the law of this country on marriage, contraception and so on. But, whatever the Archbishop and the Pope may decide between them, it is hardly likely that the House of Commons in the twentieth century would do their bidding! The Englishman's political apathy certainly lets a great deal of erosion of liberty slip by him each year, but just imagine the outcry if Dr Ramsey were to announce that the Church of England had become reunited with Rome and that one outcome of this was that the possession of contraceptives should be made illegal in this country!

Yet instead of relying simply on common sense and social custom, Mr Micklewright finds it necessary to drag in the statutes of 1392 and 1535 abrogating Canon Law in England, the Bill of Rights of 1689 and the Act of Settlement of 1701—as though the letter of the law governs the will of the people, instead of the other way round. What was laid down by those who have been dead for the past three or four hundred years cannot bind those living today unless it is still in accordance with public opinion. Fortunately, public opinion today is as much against the interference of Rome in English law as were our sixteenth century ancestors. That, and not the Statute Book, is our bulwark against "Vaticanism in the England of today". Incidentally, reliance on the Statute Book will not help Mr Micklewright if ever he faces a charge under the still unrepealed Blasphemy Laws!

BARBARA SMOKER

Slavery

E. MARKLEY'S letter (April 8) provokes the thought: Instead of arming themselves with weapons with which to discredit so-called Christians for failing to practise what their Master taught, would not Freethinkers be doing something more constructive and to their own credit if they were to do what they can to bring slavery to an end?

Slavery, as defined by the United Nations Supplementary Convention on Slavery (1956) exists today in more than twenty countries of the "free" world. This Society, the only body in the world fighting to end it, has consultative status at the UN, is a registered charity in the UK, welcomes new members and will gladly send information on request.

(Col.) J. R. P. MONTGOMERY
Secretary, The Anti-Slavery Society (Denison House, 296 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, SW1).

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