

FREE THINKER

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THE "HAVES", BUT THE HAVE WHATS?

AFTER THE EDITORIAL of June 3rd deploring the exploitation of one human group by another, a FREE-THINKER reader wrote asking why this paper "does not include condemnation of the most glaring example of criminal exploitation, i.e. of the working class by the capitalists". Admittedly "working class" is a misleading label, when "workers" can be "unemployed", or (like Lord Nuffield) capitalist millionaires, but inasmuch as such exploitation still survives, then we must condemn it. The Oxford Dictionary defines "to exploit" as "to use for one's own ends", and in this country it is not nearly as easy as it was to think of one clearly recognisable group of people being used (against their will) for the ends of others. That sort of thing is much more obvious in countries where labour is cheap, because jobs are scarce and too many children are born. Countries like Spain and Sicily, where religious faith and illiteracy go hand in hand, and men and women are forced to emigrate and to face possible exploitation abroad (perhaps in this country) as foreigners. And of course we find exploitation where the brown, pink or blotchy accept the services of the sun-tanned and treat them as less than human.

Of course class-conflicts still exist in this country, often fostered by those who try to escape their own sense of failure by condemning others, but the worst "sinners" in this sad activity are not always those who grumble about the capitalists. You have only to listen to the chat in the "bowler hat belt" of affluent England about children "meeting the right kind of people", or "the wrong kind of people nowadays getting the university places" or the "wogs" next door. However it was a garage mechanic who made the confusing remark that the Dutch abolished capital punishment 100 years ago "because they don't have the same respect for human life over there as we have in England . . ." Ignorance is the ammunition in the class war, and perhaps schools are still ensuring too big a supply. Just as major wars continue between religious or political ideologies, some of the last skirmishes in snobbery may take place between the Christian sects,

where Anglicans look down on the chapel-going non-conformists and roundly condemn RCs. Disestablishment will help here, too. All the same, wars of all sorts are gradually becoming more a matter of shame than of pride, and the frontiers are breaking down. A non-Oxford accent is far less of a hindrance than it was, and clothes are no longer an indication of anything, thanks to Marks and Spencers and teenage incomes.

Where, then, are the real conflicting "distinctions" if they are no longer primarily "class"? They always were perhaps primarily a matter of opportunities, or "privilege". In May of this year it was reported that a disabled man had written a letter saying, "I am left every week with about 12s for food, toilet requisities, etc. I find it almost impossible to live". Shortly after writing this, he was found dead. His disablement had robbed him of the opportunity to improve his own situation, and no one had done it for him. Disabled housewives who are not eligible for any form of state aid often find themselves in hospitals where they cost the country some £50 a week. Mrs Megan du Boisson (one of the founders of the Disablement Income Group) reported, "With even a small state pension many women in this position would be able to run their own homes . . ." They are not given the opportunity. In Germany there are still thousands of stateless displaced persons who can only dimly remember which "class" they used to belong to before they were taken to Germany as slave labour in the 1930's. They have been waiting more than 20 years for some compensation, some "opportunity" to make a future. People who have little more than faith in God, who believe in paradise after death because life has been and still is hell.

We may not be able to escape (and we certainly can't help) the human group into which we are born. We may even bear some uncomfortable marks of it all our lives, but what really divides us from each other are not so much the accents, habits, vocabulary and so on, as the opportunities we lack, or find, or make or lose. Some people are incapable of making what they do not find ready-made, but most can go ahead, a little way at least, providing, of course, that they are not too deprived or neglected in childhood, have a passport and the right coloured skin, four healthy limbs and are not blind, deaf or spastic. If they are mentally handicapped from birth (and one family in every hundred has such a child), then they may never be able to do more than grasp unsteadily a small, shadowy patch of life offered by someone else with infinite patience. If our opportunities depend on husbands, wives or children, we may yet find ourselves blown sky-high by disaster or just by time. The opportunity we want may be there, but bereavement or domestic demands may sap the will

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or energy to grasp it. Or the opportunity may not be there at all, just because of losing our identity through death or divorce.

In all such situations it is surely the responsibility of society to help far more than it does at the moment. Secular-Humanists come in all colours and classes, healthy and not so healthy. To some degree we are all pacifists, and believe that wars of all sorts are better prevented than fought. We know that whereas a small child cries because its own knee is grazed, adults ought to be able to cry for the grazed knees of others. We try to see society and the world with an unjaundiced eye in order to find out what needs to be done, so that more people can find the sort

of opportunities they need to live interesting lives with integrity. We know that if we don't do something to improve matters, no god or supernatural power will do it for us. If we cannot directly do anything ourselves about the cure, we can at least avoid over-simplifying the diagnosis, and go on studying and discussing the situation. And if we can do nothing else, we can give encouragement to those who *are* actively engaged in trying to make this world a happier place for more people. For millions of people today, just to be a "worker" would be a privilege they may never enjoy. The Humanist slogan is not "Workers of the world . . ." but "peoples of the world, unite!", fight injustice, hypocrisy, intolerance, superstition and suffering, but not each other.

OPEN FORUM: THINKING ABOUT THE FREETHINKER

Comments:

I FIND the FREETHINKER rather uninspiring nowadays—it is now seems very little different from the *Humanist*. However, may I hope for a return to a rather more militant attitude? (C. Jones, Merioneth.)

THE SUGGESTION from John Shaw is excellent. In addition to the articles he suggested I would also appreciate something on Free Love and Extra-Marital Relations, etc. (Stan Mills, SW16.)

THINKING PEOPLE don't continually need to be re-sold on the absurdities of religion. I can understand your wish to supply a minimal amount of ammunition to confront Christians with, but it should be short and meaty. How about a little more humour—but not the kind that requires a knowledge of Latin, Byron and current English TV programmes . . . I'd like to see some reference to *Playboy*. If a noted educator/sociologist of the old school can send them a letter congratulating them on the cunning use of sexual window-dressing to attract an audience for moral education lessons, I think we should at least recognise them. *Playboy* may not be doing the business *our* way, but they're doing the business with a circulation of four million plus . . . Until the FREETHINKER begins reaching the masses and is made palatable to the masses, we'll be stuck with a small army of Generals and no riflemen. (Sid Ledson, Germany.)

I ENJOY variety and think less well of *too many* advanced repetitive articles serving the already converted Free-thinkers, but welcome articles which may be designed to serve new or potentially new recruits. I see a real need for this. I enjoy also Reviews of new (or re-issued) important appropriate books, plays, films, and explications of some developments in science and research. Also I think that on some major political social and economic matters the FREETHINKER should have bold particular views, e.g. declare for promoting *world* law, police, currency language and thus the limitation of national sovereignties—these are only particularisations of NSS "Objects and Principles" brought down to "brass tacks". We should be open enough to accept appropriate articles not necessarily reflecting *wholly* FREETHINKER editorial views but which are those of mature Humanists.

(E. Hughes-Jones, Dorset.)

WORLD AFFAIRS are adequately dealt with in propaganda party-organs; we Freethinkers are trying to grasp infinity. May I be allowed to regret your new editorial policy, involving the exclusion of verse . . . ?

(Arthur E. Carpenter, Surrey.)

I AM INTERESTED in the plea put forward by Mr John Shaw (June 24th) for a series of columns giving Free-

thought approach to various subjects. While sympathising I'd like to point out that there is a great danger involved. If you formulate simplified arguments for Humanism the danger is that they may be adopted as authoritative and you will be on the way to building a Humanist Scripture and establishing dogmas. The most precious thing a free-thinker possesses is his freedom to think for himself, and anything that tends to crystalise his ideas in terms of "what Humanists think" about this that or the other is liable to end up in something like the Church catechism. Or the Articles of Belief.

S. S. A. WATKINS.

To sum up:

The Editor has taken note of all the suggestions and comments which confirm the need for variety and a wider choice of material for both committed secularists and also for those coming upon the paper and subjects for the first time. Letters about the layout have not been quoted, as this is a matter for trial and error. It is useful to have criticism, but there are practical limitations to what can be done.

Articles about the LDOS, Women in Turkey, Roman Catholicism and Birth Control, Rhodesia, G. W. Foote, and a discussion between the "Old Guard" and the "New". Apart from a series about "How I Became an Atheist" there will also be contributions from students at different schools about their problems with RI. And this is by no means all that is planned. **Order your copies of the FREETHINKER now!** And persuade all your friends that they should have their own. Thank you for your co-operation. This subject in Open Forum is now closed.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

CENTENARY LECTURES THE MEANING AND VALUE OF FREETHOUGHT

Chairman: DAVID TRIBE

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

HOW I BECAME AN HUMANIST

D. Molyneux

HOW DID I BECOME a Freethinker, a Humanist, an Agnostic with a distinct leaning towards Atheism?

It must all have started long ago with a remark my father made about the volunteers returning from the Boer War. "It's all so useless, this fighting business" or words to that effect. Then later, on August 4th, 1914, he resigned his eldership and withdrew his lines from the church. He never objected in any way when my brother and then I offered to "fight for King and Country". He admitted that the spirit of adventure was part of youth and in any case the female "white feather brigades" were becoming overwhelming.

My mother on the other hand, although an ardent churchgoer, never took much notice of myths such as Christmas and Easter. I hung up my stocking on Hogmanay, the last day of the Old Year, and was fully aware that the morning's surprise came from father and mother and not from Santa Claus. I was able to boast about this very advanced piece of knowledge to other children, even at the expense of a bloody nose. I was also assured that we rolled eggs at Easter time because eggs were becoming more plentiful. This was indeed as logical an explanation as was heralding in a New Year with surprise gifts to one another or, jokingly, heaping lumps of coal on someone else's fire to suggest the light and comfort of future fires in that household of friends.

My brother was demobbed a fully qualified private while I was demobbed a snob-qualified commissioned officer. My brother rapidly became an ardent Communist while I became equally an ardent Loyalist and Conservative. Between us stood my father who was an expert "Land for the People" Liberal. The ensuing three-cornered discussions, nay, arguments went on early into the morning. My brother had all the time-worn arguments of Karl Marx while I only had the rather deflated "Divine Right of Kings", upon which unstable foundation to build my paper palaces ready to be knocked down.

Later, going to live in the coal mining areas of Fifeshire and Lanarkshire, I began to review all my thoughts. During the 1926 strike my opinions began to harden. At a dance I heard a well known coal owner's daughter remark, "I don't know why Daddie can't keep those horrible men down the pits like the ponies and take them up to the surface for breeding purposes only". As an architect I was meeting the affluent classes; as a social enquirer, I was meeting a race of hardened workers whom I came to respect very much, and my opinions began to fluctuate and finally to change. The two classes had to be brought together and made to work and play for the good of man-

kind in the present world and not for some unknown "pie in the sky".

About this time I asked my wife why she sometimes went to Church. Her answer, "Well, it never did my mother and father, nor their mother and father, any harm, so why should it do me any harm?" My answer made her say that she fully believed that the minister in the pulpit was a hypocrite, but that a way of moral life was a way of moral life and individuals could hardly be expected to alter it. It would all depend on the evolution of thought and education whereby the words of modern philosophy would gradually become part of the life of the people. So she really was much nearer the truth of the matter in an instinctive way than I was myself with all my reading and attending meetings.

The crunch really came when one of our wee sons unexpectedly died. We really meant to adopt a replacement from the Clydebank blitz, but came to the conclusion that this would be irrational because we were only trying to solve our own sorrows and not the woes of some wee chap, so we abandoned the idea. We thought it would be more rational to get a dog, so that the other children could be brought up with another species of nature. Roy, a mongrel, became a real friend who brought all the family together more than they had ever been.

When my late wife died I became more of a humanist than ever and began to read and to look for arguments. I have found that there are really many people both inside and outside the churches who hold the same opinions as I do myself, only that the ones in the Church formally accept conformity with the Establishment so as to gain their ambitions in their chosen walks of life.

I myself am now completely Humanistic in outlook and find comfort in the knowledge that people are becoming more and more aligned to Freethought as time and education go on. I also find a great deal of comfort in the fact that a little of me and my thoughts will be "resurrected" in my children, in my grandchildren and to an even greater extent in my great grandchildren as yet unborn. I am sure that reason will win in the end and that a limit of population, a limit to war, to crime and to Mrs Grundyism will gradually eliminate the need for any kind of superstitions or so-called revealed beliefs and faiths. Ghosts and Poltergeists, Religions and Establishments and all the other paraphernalia attached to Hoodoo and Taboo are on their way to the museums.

[Next week in this series, Marion Waine describes how she became an Atheist.]

CENTENARY RALLY

The National Secular Society is organising a rally at Northampton as part of its Centenary celebrations. It will take place on Sunday, July 17th.

There will be a luncheon at which the present Member of Parliament (Mr Reginald Paget) will propose a toast to the memory of his predecessor and the founder of the NSS, Charles Bradlaugh. The response will be by Mr Charles B. Bonner, a grandson of Bradlaugh and President of the World Union of Freethinkers. It is expected that Mr Bonner's son and grandson will also attend.

In the afternoon there will be a procession to the statue of Bradlaugh where flowers will be laid. A public meeting will be held in Carnegie Hall, and the speakers will include David Collis and David Tribe. The names of other speakers will be announced soon.

Coach parties are coming from London, Leicester and Birmingham. Details of fares, etc. can be had from the organisers. Those requiring tickets (11/6 each) for the luncheon only, should apply to NSS Head Office, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1 (Tel. HOP 2727).

NEWS AND NOTES

ON FRIDAY, JULY 22nd, Mr David Steel, MP (Liberal, Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles) is introducing a comprehensive Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill into the House of Commons. **This will be the fifth attempt since the war to reform our antiquated and inhumane abortion laws of 1861.** It is essential that Mr Steel's Bill is not "talked out" by extremist members of religious minorities as has happened on previous occasions. To avoid this at least 100 supporting MPs must be present in the House of Commons on July 22nd to vote in favour of ending the debate and forcing a decision.

The Abortion Law Reform Association knows that at least 400 MPs favour some measure of reform of the law, and it appeals for **all readers of the FREETHINKER who are in favour of reform to write immediately to their MPs (so long as they are also in favour of reform)** asking him or her to be sure to be present in the House on that day. MPs should be present for Divisions which may take place at any time from 3 pm onwards. There will certainly be a Division on the Bill at four o'clock. *Failure to get 100 votes could lead to the Bill being "talked out", and that would be disastrous.* Supporters should act now in order to give their MP an opportunity to make sure that there is no conflicting engagement for that most important day. "Remind him" (writes Madeleine Simms) "that 25 women die unnecessarily each year as the direct result of our savage abortion law. More progressive countries than our own have long since carried out their own reforms. Abortion in Britain is not only a medical and social problem, it is also a central moral and humanitarian issue."

Although there are some Catholic sympathisers in the House (and 60 per cent of Catholics have been found to be in favour of abortion being legal in some cases) there is no doubt that very strong pressure indeed will be brought to bear on the RC MPs on both sides of the House. Cardinal Heenan (talking to the Catholic Nurses' Congress) did not hesitate to classify abortion and contraception with infanticide (whereas reform of the law might well serve to prevent the infanticide we already have in this country). And although there is some Anglican support for the Bill, many individual Anglicans will be busy expressing their bitter opposition to reform. Christians tend to suggest that only they have any regard for the "sanctity of life"; but it all depends on what you mean by "life", and whether you value the existence of the foetus in the womb (in its first 16 weeks) more than you value the lives of schoolgirls who have been (perhaps incestuously) raped, married women who will risk their health and even lives in the hands of quack abortionists if they cannot get a medically safe and legal operation, or the woman who has reason to believe that her baby will be born horribly deformed. It all depends whether you argue from theory, from theology without experience, or if you can add imagination to experience and settle for a generous mercy. **Make no mistake, the obstructionists will be busy this month. May the lobbying from Secular-Humanists be twice as energetic.**

Rapid retreat from responsibility . . .

COLIN LEGUM (Commonwealth correspondent for the *Observer*) reported what he called "the most dishonourable transaction in the recent history of the handover of British power in her colonies". On October 4 Basutoland is to be granted "independence" under a minority and unrepresentative

government of the Basutoland National Party (BNP). Just over a year ago the BNP polled about 41 per cent of the vote at elections where there was violence while funds came in from pro-government sources in South Africa and from a Catholic organisation in West Germany. Colin Legum states that this minority party can only survive by resorting to coercion. After October 4, Britain refuses to accept any responsibility and the BNP will be forced to invite Verwoerd, if help is needed. Basutoland will then, it is suggested only be able to maintain her independence as a semi-dependency of South Africa, by which, of course, she is surrounded. Verwoerd and the Vatican should remember the British government in their prayers. They have much to thank us for.

And in Jakarta . . .

PRESIDENT SUKARNO said in his speech on June 22 that he has dedicated himself to freedom. "I leave it to God if he wants to give me strength to carry on that service."

Not forgetting Earl's Court

DR GRAHAM "urged world leaders to open all conferences with a prayer . . ." *The Spectator* reported that in 1958 the Sales Executive Club of New York elected Graham as "Salesman of the Year".

Two more Press Releases

DAVID TRIBE (President of the NSS) has repeated his invitation to Dr Graham to meet him

"at a public hall in a debate whose arrangements would be undertaken, at his request, entirely by the NSS". Mr Tribe says, "If the reverend doctor's arguments are too inane to be answered they are unworthy of publication to delude the shallow-minded. If they are rational and constructive they should in a free society be subjected to rational and constructive comment that enjoys the same circulation."

LINDSAY BURNET (Secretary of the BHA) has written to Dr Graham proposing that he might agree to engage in a "public dialogue" with Brigid Brophy, and stresses that the BHA approaches him

"in a genuine spirit of enquiry, such as has recently led us to similar dialogue with members of the C of E and representatives of the Vatican."

Ex-Anglicans: was your confirmation legal ?

BISHOPS are instructing the clergy to revert to the confirmation service of 1662. Technically the 1928 service (by which most people under 50 have been admitted to full membership of the C of E) lacks authority. Well, what happens now? Or does it (like so many promises and vows in the Anglican Church) just not matter?

Invitation to live in Cheltenham

THE *Daily Mail* reported Mr Justice Lawton, at Sheffield Assizes, as saying that

"A bit of wife-thumping on a Saturday night may not amount to cruelty in some parts of England, but a bit of thumping in Cheltenham may be cruelty. The social background counts."

"For the last 300 years the work of religion has been a work of destruction."

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE (1820-1910)

"Cruel men believe in a cruel God, and use their belief to excuse their cruelty. Only kindly men believe in a kindly God, and they would be kindly in any case."

BERTRAND RUSSELL

THIS IS OUR DAY

John J. Shephard (b. 1901) is an engineer who was a Baptist until his 20's and only made his final break with religion about 8 years ago. David (b. 1939), shares his father's views. His recent and serious road accident has served to confirm the family's agnosticism and their confidence in the basic goodness of humanity.

THE TITLE OF THIS ARTICLE, OF COURSE, REFERS TO "SUNDAY", appropriated from the pagan sun-worshippers, claimed by the early Christians as their own, and, like so many other stolen festivals, called a "Holy Day". Inevitably, non-Christians and others rebelled against the restrictions placed upon them by the then powerful Church, which was responsible for so many of the laws of this country. Many of these archaic laws, stupid out-of-date and out-of-touch as they are today, are still enforceable, notably the "Sunday Observance Laws" which are invoked by that most peculiar and sanctimonious of religious organisations, the Lord's Day Observance Society.

The purpose of the LDOS is to prevent the use of Sundays for any purpose other than (as they put it) "devotion, praise and prayer for Our Lord and His Day", which presumably means a jolly hour or two of hymn singing around the harmonium, prayers and supplications, and, of course, early-morning, after-dinner and evening attendance at church, or now more generally Baptist or Methodist "chapel". The dinner, by the way, must be cooked on Saturday and consumed *cold* on Sunday, so that no labour shall be involved on the Lord's Day! The fourth of the Ten Commandments, given personally (it is alleged) to Moses by God, is taken very literally. The encouragement of work on Sunday is *out*, as is recreation, entertainment or amusement of any kind; and this includes not only TV, radio and so on, but also travel in any form except of course, walking to chapel. Even driving to the seaside or the country for picnics is forbidden. The playing or watching of any form of sport or games, the opening of halls, cinemas or dance halls, the running of ferry services (as in Scotland) to and from out-lying islands, and even the opening and use of playgrounds for children, are all taboo according to the LDOS. All these restrictions are subject to the ancient (or not so ancient) Sunday Observance Laws which are resurrected and invoked by the Society to gain its own ends—a gloomy and puritanical "dead" Sunday.

I had been distantly interested in this sombre-minded society for some years, when it was run by a Mr Martin, "Misery Martin" as he was dubbed by people who had no time for his society. I heard and read a lot about the work and methods of the society, but I only finally became aroused to action against them a little less than two years ago when my attention was called to the activities of Albert Peters, West of England travelling representative of the LDOS. Mr Peters is a full-time paid officer. (An advertisement for "Workers in the field for our Lord's Day" in *Joy and Light*, the society's quarterly magazine, stated that "though, of course, we cannot pay salaries comparable with industry, you will, at least be, doing the Lord's work.")

Children's Charity Performance

It was while Peters was busy for the Lord and His Day in Torquay, Devonshire, that he learned that about a hundred or more youngsters, ages from 5 to about 15, proposed to give a show or concert under the direction of

John and David Shephard

a Sunday School teacher, the Head of a dancing academy. The proceeds were to go to the aid of underprivileged and handicapped children in the care of the NSPCC. The show was to be given on a *Sunday!* Thanks to Mr Peters in the service of his Lord the show was stopped, two or three days before it was due to open at Christmas time, although the children had been rehearsing since July. Although the show was put on (on a weekday), because of all the fuss it was a near-flop and the charity concerned lost over £100. The youngsters, of course, were bitterly disappointed.

The Sunday Freedom League Petition

This so incensed me that, with my son David, we immediately declared war on the LDOS and all its works, and launched what was to become "The Sunday Freedom League". We drew up a petition to be presented to parliament at the crucial time (this is an important factor), with a manifesto calling for, at best, the repeal and removal from the statute book of the laws or, at worst, the modification or alteration of the archaic, ancient and not-so-ancient laws, especially those on Sunday Observance which place such power in the hands of the LDOS. Even though its leader, Harold Legerton, claims in his inaptly named journal *Joy and Light* that it is God's Laws he is upholding, nevertheless he has to rely on the Laws of Man for results.

Having written out our manifesto and aims and objects on the first page of an ordinary accounts book, my son and I approached our workmates and friends in this area around Bath and Bristol and in the villages nearby. We fairly quickly collected a thousand or so signatures. We wrote to the local newspapers, all of which obviously saw "news" in our venture, and in came letters and requests to be included in our petition. It was inevitable that we should also get a few people against our cause, Christian objectors or supporters of the LDOS, with the usual run of abuse from the anonymous lunatic fringe. One Christian lady quoted the Bible (she said) saying that "in my sin and unrighteousness I had become the associate of and walked with thieves, murderers, prostitutes and whoremongers..." Now what, I want to know, is a "whore-monger"? I sent her a Christmas card and a New Year calendar, just to be matey, but she crumpled them up and sent them back to me. My collection of religious tracts is a constant joy to me, especially one, "Testimonies from the brink of Hell", which encourages me when things fall a little flat, as they sometimes do when the newspapers and other sources of information temporarily dry up and we lack information about the intended activities of the LDOS.

We act as quickly and as quietly as possible, and, by telegram and/or letters to the mayors or councils concerned, try to persuade them to "call the bluff" of the LDOS over, say, the closing of children's playgrounds or the playing of football or cricket on Sundays. We have scored more than one victory over the enemy by these methods, and have had the gratification of hearing that the playgrounds have remained open on Sundays, or that the football or cricket matches were a great success.

The Petition signatures still come in; too slowly, however, for us! We continue to write to local newspapers, and replies and the odd name or two come in by return. We get the occasional enthusiast who, with his or her own signature, sends us a sheet of 20 names. Each signatory

(Continued on page 216)

OUR FIRST EDITOR

Herbert Cutner (b. 1881) went to a Wesleyan Methodist as well as C of E school. He became interested in Freethought in 1896 and came across the FREETHINKER three years later. He has read it ever since and contributed since 1920. He was a commercial artist for over 50 years and is the author of several books, on Freethought and on Art.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY was not an easy one for a Freethought journal. It was never easy in any case to publish either a book attacking the Christian religion, or give a lecture against it. Our very Christian "authorities", deprived of more brutal methods, did their utmost to make "infidelity" a horrible crime which had to be punished with the greatest severity possible. They did not succeed in abolishing unbelief but it never was easy to establish a journal which could be circulated for long though there were many attempts.

Leaving aside the sporadic attempts by Richard Carlile, and the "Devil's Chaplain", the ex-Rev. Robert Taylor, to found a scholarly journal, there appeared one in 1841, *The Oracle of Reason*, edited by Charles Southwell, an erratic and brilliant Freethinker, whose article on the "Jew Book" brought him a twelve month's sentence for "blasphemy". Here, George Jacob Holyoake stepped in to edit the paper in Southwell's absence, and by saying at a lecture in Cheltenham that he would put the Deity on half-pay, was promptly tried—in August, 1842—for blasphemy, and sentenced to six months imprisonment. Christians in those days had such power, and they used it. Holyoake began a new journal, *The Reasoner*, in 1846, which lasted until 1861. The chief reason why it ceased publication was, I suspect, because Charles Bradlaugh began a journal himself in 1859—*The Investigator*, which had a short life; it was followed in 1860 by the far more successful *National Reformer* which ran for 33 years. Bradlaugh died in 1891 and it lasted two years longer under John M. Robertson.

All these journals except perhaps that edited by Southwell had one thing in common—a kind of solemnity which made out that Freethought was a solemn subject, to be discussed in solemn terms. And it is not surprising that when young Foote came on the scene, and thought nothing of chiding the Great Leader himself, Charles Bradlaugh, his Freethought friends decided that here was just the man they wanted. The story is too long to tell here in full, but G. W. Foote, who had come to London in 1868 at the age of 18, and very soon made his mark as a writer and lecturer as well as an editor, brought out *The Secularist* with G. J. Holyoake and soon edited it alone. This was in 1876, and, feeling that there should be a political journal, he started *The Liberal* in 1879, and brought out *The Freethinker* in 1881. It was no easy task, for, like nearly all these early Freethinkers and would-be editors he faced immense financial difficulties.

The early numbers of *The Freethinker* had very little chance of making their mark at first. Foote, a gifted writer, had to make Freethought readable, and where possible, humorous. If the reader can get copies of the two debates Holyoake had with the Rev. Brewin Grant in the fifties of last century, he would see how Grant constantly poked fun at Holyoake, laughing at his solemnity and, unable to answer the Freethinker's brilliant arguments, discredited them because he had no humour. Grant even claimed that it was he who was the true Secularist—a Christian Secularist, that is—and so on. He kept turning the tables on Holyoake who, however, never

lost his head or the argument.

Grant challenged Bradlaugh several times and they met in debate, but Bradlaugh simply could not stand the "irreverent" antics of Grant on the platform.

Contemporary with Foote was a Methodist ex-parson, Joseph Symes, a brilliant writer and debater, who also met Grant, but this time it was tit for tat. Freethinkers thought that Symes was just the man to edit a Freethought journal which could be brighter and more humorous than any produced so far, but Symes wanted to go to Australia and so eventually the post was given to Foote. In passing, it may interest readers that there had been at least two women who had brought out Freethought journals. The first was Emma Martin, brought up as a Baptist, who edited for a while *The Bristol Magazine*—which I have not seen. Her pamphlet, *Baptism, a Pagan Rite* (1843), is an excellent one and still is a valid attack. She died in 1851. The second woman editor was Harriet Law, who lectured and wrote widely and held several debates. Her journal was *The Secular Chronicle* which appeared during 1876-79 and which I was lucky enough to see. The three volumes were destroyed with *The Freethinker's* valuable library during the Second World War.

It can be seen from all this that publishing and editing a Freethought journal was no picnic, no sinecure. Foote, with the help of J. M. Wheeler, his lifelong friend and sub-editor had to look after everything—writing, printing, circulation. He had to *live*, and that could be done only by paid lectures; and only those of us who have had to bring out a paper in time know what it means.

Foote, however, was determined to succeed, and, to give his readers "humour", he was persuaded to emulate the aggressive French Freethinker Leo Taxil, who made a big splash with comic Bible illustrations. Some of these can still be seen in his *Vie de Jesus*, but these were the best of a very bad bunch, and it was a pity that Foote actually thought they were funny!

In the end, Foote was charged with "blasphemy" and hauled up before a Roman Catholic judge, was sentenced to a year's imprisonment which he resented, quite rightly, all his life.

After all, who were the people "harmd" by these sketches? Anybody at all? Christians never, if they could help it, looked at a copy of *The Freethinker*, and Foote claimed—again rightly—that, as he did not believe in God, there was for him no God to blaspheme. He wrote a full account of his prison experiences in *A Prisoner for Blasphemy*, a valuable record, and he published his speeches in his own defence in another volume, which prove Foote not only as a consummate debater, but a master of English eloquence. The pity of it was that all this, and his leadership of the National Secular Society, are almost forgotten by Freethinkers today. He edited *The Freethinker* for 34 years, and was President of the NSS for 14 years. He died in 1915.

But there is one other aspect of his work which is so very important that I shall reserve it for another article. This is his literary work, his books and pamphlets. In some ways they have never been bettered.

G. W. Foote was a fine journalist and an eloquent speaker. The fact that his paper still survives and has done so for 84 years is proof enough. May it continue to flourish under its new editor and continue the work he so ardently fought for.

H. Cutner

FREETHINKER

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Telephone: HOP 0029

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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

- Humanist Housing Association, Garden Party, Sunday, July 10th, 3 p.m., Blackham House, 35 Worple Road, Wimbledon (near Wimbledon main line and Underground stations).
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, July 10th, 11 a.m.: Dr. D. STARK MURRAY, "The Problems of Modern India".
Unity Theatre (1 Goldrington Street, London, NW1), "Inherit the Wind" by ROBERT E. LEE and JEROME LAWRENCE. Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 7.45 p.m. until July 17th. Tickets 3/6, 5/1 and 7/6. Members only (membership 7/6 per year). Box office, EUSton 5391.
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.
World Union of Freethinkers, International Congress, Conway Hall, London, September 1st-5th. Interpreters and other helpers urgently required. Please contact Mr C. Bradlaugh Bonner, 23 Streathbourne Road, London, SW17. Telephone: BALham 3508.
Humanist Letter Network (International): send s.a.e. to Kit Mout, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

LUNCHEON - WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY AT THE BRADLAUGH STATUE - PUBLIC MEETING

CENTENARY RALLY

NORTHAMPTON

SUNDAY, JULY 17th

Speakers include:

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER DAVID COLLIS
REGINALD PAGET, QC, MP DAVID TRIBE
Dr DAVID KERR, MP HECTOR HAWTON

Transport from—

BIRMINGHAM (Mr W. Miller, 62 Warwards Lane, Birmingham 29. Telephone: Selly Oak 1121)
LONDON (Mr W. McIlroy, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1. Telephone: HOP 2717)
LEICESTER (C. H. Hammersley, 58 Huntingdon Road, Leicester)

LOGIC OF THE TEENAGER

Gerald Jackson

Gerald Jackson (b. 1922) is a writer who left Judaism for Secularism in the 1950's.

HARSH CRITICISM OF TEENAGERS by many of the adult population is quite unjustified. Much of the blame lies with the less reputable dailies which blow up a small incident out of all proportion, with blazing headlines, in order to boost the sales of their papers. You cannot condemn a whole generation on the bad behaviour of a small minority.

Many of these censorious persons' dislike for teenagers is based solely on their appearance. Time and time again I have heard people say, "Well, look at the way they dress, it's disgusting!" But is it? Surely one is free to dress as one chooses; if they prefer long hair to short, they need no better reason than this to grow long hair; if their music offends, we don't have to listen. It's as simple as that! What may appear banal to an older generation can be perfectly acceptable to a younger generation. Things have reached a sorry state if one's character is judged on such issues.

I sometimes feel this resentment to teenagers is nothing more than a deep subconscious envy; this is how adults would like to have behaved when they were teenagers, but any attempts they made at being rebellious or unconventional were immediately crushed, and so they now retaliate by criticising whatever the youth of today does.

I had never discussed religion with my son, although I am atheist, I did not influence him one way or the other, but he did receive RI at school. At the age of sixteen he came home from school one day and said, "You know, dad, I don't believe in God! All those so-called miracles had a perfectly logical explanation, only the people were too ignorant to fathom it out". Another time he said: "Why don't they tell us what is wrong with communism, instead of just saying it's no good? Surely many countries that became communist did so because of the social injustices that prevailed?" This, from a teenager still at school; a long-haired, very much "with it" teenager.

To me, this shows that the "kids" today can think clearly and logically; they are not nearly so gullible as they were when I was at school. One thing is evident; they refuse to be brain-washed by any political or religious propaganda. They are far less tolerant of racial discrimination, and protest most strongly against social or political injustices. Perhaps they do not go into the jungles preaching the "gospels" as did past generations, but they are prepared to work in a more realistic and practical way. Our Saviour is not Jesus Christ, but the teenagers! Jesus Christ cannot fill the "empty bellies" of starving children, but the teenagers can.

The future of the world will one day be in their hands, and I feel quite confident that they will make a good job of it. After all, only a fool would say that past generations have made much of a success; look at the state we're in today!

"... it is important to show that no supernatural reasons are needed to make men kind and to prove that only through kindness can the human race achieve happiness."

BERTRAND RUSSELL

THIS IS OUR DAY

(Continued from page 213)

automatically becomes a member of the Sunday Freedom League. We ask for no contributions from members, preferring to stand the expense of the campaign from our own pockets. But I must hasten to thank all those who have sent us small sums, which we have placed in a modest "Fighting Fund" for use later when expenses may get a little out of hand. Our League has now close on 3,000 members and nothing would please us more than if, as the result of this article, we get a sack-full of letters from readers of the FREETHINKER.

TV publicity for the League

A highlight of our campaign (which also resulted in more support) was my TV appearance in 1965 on TWW Cardiff, when Mr Peters and I came face to face. His Lord forsook poor "Piety" that night! When, some months later, BBC TV contacted me, requesting me to meet Mr Peters on a special programme, the project had to be abandoned because apparently, Peters had "gone to ground" and couldn't be found.

There are nearly fifty people on the council of the LDOS ("Incorporated" in small letters, I wonder why?), BAs, DDs, theologians and members of the church and chapel hierarchy. However we hear little or nothing from anyone except the central star of this extraordinary galaxy, Harold Legerton, who is threatening to "throw a spanner in the works" if the MCC arrange for cricket to be played on Sundays, and expressed the hope that a "national disaster will overcome our nation" if this should happen. There's a charitable, tolerant servant of a loving God for you!

Lord Willis' Bill

Lord Willis has been promised time after the summer recess for bringing his "brighter Sunday" bill into Parliament. As a supporter of the Sunday Freedom League he has written to us saying that he wants *all* the support he can get in what he (and we) know will be a tough fight against the LDOS. He has promised to keep us informed of any moves that may be made, and we are proud to range ourselves behind him.

Please, will you give us your encouragement and your support? Give us your names on our petition to Parliament to abolish the laws which set out to dictate what we can or cannot do on a Sunday. Laws which are invoked to interfere with our freedom to spend Sundays as we choose. No one wants to prevent members of the LDOS doing what they enjoy on a Sunday. What right have they to impose their will upon us? We need your help—urgently. Our address is John and David Shephard, Lyndon Vale, Paulton, Nr. Bristol, Somerset.

LETTERS**Humanist Co-operation**

YOUR EDITORIAL in today's issue of the FREETHINKER is like a breath of fresh air. Particularly do I like your suggested cartoon on Christian unity, but I wonder whether our opponents could not devise one against us. On the image that we present to others it could be that of a motorist, at a crossroads, gazing at a sign post lying on the ground. With a caption underneath saying "Which way do we go?" As a cynical, non-Humanist friend of mine put it recently, "It does not take two minutes to discover what Humanists are against, but what the hell are they for?"

We would profoundly disagree with this cynicism, but if this is the image that we present to people outside the Humanist Movement, then it is time we did something about it, collectively. True, as you state, there are differences between us. We, as Ethical Humanists, would not go all the way with you as Secular Humanists, but the differences between us fade into insignificance when compared with the many broad issues upon which we agree.

Christianity has taken some serious jolts in recent years, but it is still a long way from being a spent force; indeed with its proposed new face-lift, it could recover some ground unless there is some powerful, rational alternative to it. Whatever we may think, we would not be accepted as such by the man in the street. We have a duty as I see it to make known our views and our objects through the country. We have to get over that Humanism is not a narrow, negative intellectualism, nor even a passive or permissive approach to life, but is a positive way of life that can enrich human existence and human society, and create a saner, safer world.

There is a need for a Humanist Council upon which all sections of the Humanist Movement are equally represented, to explore the broad areas of agreement between us and initiate a policy and programme for growth upon which we can unite.

H. G. KNIGHT, *General Secretary*
South Place Ethical Society

"Humanist Party" Politics?

THE IMPRESSION I get from the closing sentences of your leader (June 10) is that you are quite happy with a situation in which there are *no* Humanist Party members seeking election to give practical effect to Humanist ideas. May I ask you directly whether my impression is correct? There is an alternative to the situation as it is now. This is to try to encourage the formation of Humanist Parties (in *all* the sovereign armed states of the world) which will seek an explicit mandate from the electors to merge the states of the world into ever wider spheres of Humanist control with eventual establishment of Humanist world government as the proper basis for human society.

E. G. MACFARLANE

(I think it is more practical to introduce Humanism into our three-party system than to create yet more parties, left-wing, right-wing, religious or secular "Humanist". Obviously the more Humanists who stand for parliament the better.—Ed.)

Conscription in Australia

FROM TIME TO TIME one reads of British migrants complaining that before leaving Britain they were not informed truly of conditions in Australia. It is doubtful if people in the British Isles are aware of Australia's present policy of conscripting twenty-year-old men to serve in the army in Vietnam, where two conscripts have been killed within recent weeks.

We hope that you will give this letter wide publicity so that any young men of conscription age, or any parent with sons of twenty or approaching twenty, will think again before coming to Australia. As soon as they step ashore, these young men are liable to be conscripted and sent off to fight and perhaps die in the jungles of Vietnam—and all in the interests of American power politics. Our advice to intending migrants in this category is: don't come.

J. A. KANE, *Vice-President*,
West Australian Save Our Sons Association

Challenge to Freethinkers and Humanists

IT IS ALWAYS amazing to me that one no sooner goes to an Art Gallery or a concert, or reads letters to the papers, than one realises that there are thousands of people interested in art, music and social problems and yet one never meets them. When one has to work at a soul-destroying job for pennies (and attends to one's family with all its personal problems), there isn't enough energy left for worrying about, say, a Catholic woman who doesn't want a baby in Liverpool. Perhaps women like me do have more to offer, but the onus of personal giving doesn't leave much for self-development and crusading. Adolescents' (and even young children's) social life depend on liaison with some church, camp, or sale-of-work. Women like me are developing Humanism in a personal way at home, but we need to give our children a social structure along with it. Most people need a cloak ready to put on. It is much too difficult for most people to be in conflict with the rest of the world.

(Mrs) PAULINE HIGGS

Details of membership of the National Secular Society and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Telephone: HOP 2717.