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OLD SCHOOL TIES AND CHAINS

"BOBBY LOOKS SO SWEET in his uniform", said a proud mother. "And there he is, already referring to his friends as 'Smith' and 'Brown', even 'Robinson Minor'! It seems no time since he was in his play pen . . ." It is "no time", for Bobby is just five. Already he is being poured into the British Mould for Males. Instead of falling about in blue-jeans or trunks, he is wrapped up in grey flannel, knee-length shorts, flannel shirts, ties and that ludicrous school cap. In no time at all armed with rigger ball, cricket bat and Prayer Book, he will be launched into the world, a potential leader with nothing to lead, with an ingrained need to conform, and less and less to conform to.

Mothers who grumble about their husbands' lack of understanding see nothing odd about sending their sons to their fathers' school. Cause and effect are not connected. As for the fathers it is not "What was good enough for my son . . ." (meaning why the hell should the boy get £10 a week when I only got £2), but "I had a grand time at St Grinian's, Bobby shall have a grand time too . . ."

By the age of 8 or 9 the boy is spending most of his life in a segregated school, where the Head, Matron, Chapel, and the House take over from the family. The boys learn to call the staff "Sir" and the gardeners by their surnames only. Their mothers are sort of super-matrons who will probably let them down by wearing the wrong hat on parents' day. Women who have no identity of their own but are there, waiting, when men get back from bread-winning, golf, the club or the pub. Mothers who talk about men being children "who never grow up", mostly because their husbands went to those sort of schools—and never did.

Plutarch (c. 49-120 AD) wrote:

"I assert that children should be induced to gentlemanly behaviour by admonition and reasoning, not, in heaven's name by blows and torments. It must be obvious that such treatment is appropriate rather to slaves than to freemen . . ."

INSIDE

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| FROM THE NEW GENERATION | C. H. Godfrey |
| DETERMINISM AND FREE WILL | Michael Gray |
| FINAL REPORT FROM THE IHEU CONFERENCE IN PARIS | |
| TIME FOR A CHANGE | John Beton |
| THE OLD GUARD REPLIES | Francis J. Corina |
| CENTENARY LECTURE | Elizabeth Collins |
| LECTURE NOTICES | : ANNOUNCEMENTS |

But Bobby's parents are indeed "slaves" to a tradition they have never really thought about. They take corporal punishment for granted. Mother because she has abdicated her rights over her sons to the Male Ruling Class, and Father (who mutters that a taste of the cane never did a boy any harm) because he has never looked in the mirror to see if it did any good. A closer investigation might disclose the boy who "doesn't cry" grown into a man who weeps for no one, the ex-prefect and cricket captain who could not face failure in the rat-race, the man terrified of woman as she really is, the potential alcoholic.

In 1790 Mary Wollstonecraft wrote in her *The Rights of Woman*,

" . . . that to improve the sexes they ought, not only in private families, but in public schools, to be educated together. If marriage be the cement of society, mankind should all be educated after the same model, or the intercourse of the sexes will never deserve the name of fellowship. . . . Nay, marriage will never be held sacred till women, by being brought up with men, are prepared to be their companions rather than their mistresses . . ."

At least our state schools today are very often co-educational, but the little segregated prep-schools and minor public schools survive. The Old School Tie is not nearly such a ladder-rung to success as it was, but it remains, in another sense, a tie, a chain, by which the new generation is hindered from breaking away from the old.

In a letter to the FREETHINKER one reader (defending the "Old Guard") continued, "A parent rarely looks for guidance from its child, but expresses forbearance in face of precociousness, adding that little advice which, if taken, leads to wisdom . . ." I suspect that the young today are just too polite to point out that they don't necessarily want to be the sort of adults that they see around them. Before anyone recommends his own schooling, background, traditions and so on, he needs to be sure that he is in fact considered worth copying. And the prep and public schools don't teach that sort of humility. The young listener may well take note mentally of what it was that you had and decide to avoid it at all costs.

It's the same with organisations. The young have to live with them a lot longer now than the elderly. If they don't like what they find, then they should set about changing it before they, too, are old. They have every right to ask what the "Old Rationalist Guard" have achieved since 1793, 1866, 1896 and 1899 when our organisations were founded. If they have any sense, they will listen at least to what attempts have been made, and the problems that had to be faced; but if they haven't got the sublime confidence that they could have done better, then they probably won't even end up by doing as well. They will make their own mistakes, but they can only learn

a little from other people's experience. So much has changed so drastically during the last 50 years.

Surely the parent can and should often look "for guidance from its child", who (if he has escaped the chains of the old school tie) is more directly in touch with the present and may be benefiting from opportunities its parents never had. If you grew up in a back yard but can give your children roses, why refuse to enjoy their scent . . . ?

The Empire is no more; there are no "natives" to subdue, only "foreigners" who laugh at the ridiculous get-up the British call school uniform. Just as the youngsters

today are reserving their respect for those who earn (rather than demand) that respect, so other nations no longer touch their caps to Britain. It doesn't matter whether we like it or not, this is a fact of life that has to be faced. If we want to keep up with the more progressive countries of the world, we have got to take a long hard look in the mirror, throw away the old school, national, segregationist ties and chains, and recognise that we are all students in a co-educational group of nations in which everyone can and must learn from everyone else.

Poor Bobby. He isn't being given a chance.

C. H. Godfrey

FROM THE NEW GENERATION

Clive Godfrey is 22 and comes from a strong church family. He calls for more action . . .

I DO NOT PROFESS to be an average Humanist. I am sure there is no such thing, but I would like to be able to give older Humanists, Freethinkers, etc. an insight into a new generation of Humanists..

I was brought up in a conventional, middle class, Congregationalist Christian home, was sent regularly to Sunday school and encouraged to believe in "the true faith". I obliged without much trouble until I reached the age of 15. The seeds of doubt were sown when I was transferred from my secondary school to the local college of technology. Here I started a study science, zoology and similar associated subjects. Although I had always been an avid reader, I now discovered books on psychology and philosophy, and began to miss lectures in order to read them. Within a very few months the seeds had grown and matured; I called myself an atheist.

Some three years later (still an atheist and even arrogant in my views) I noticed an insignificant advertisement on the back page of the *Sunday Times*. I wrote and received information about the BHA, and was dumbfounded. Here was a group of people who believed as I did; an organised movement! People who rejected belief in the supernatural, who wanted to improve the world without being dictatorial or dogmatic about it. I joined.

Disillusionment

I am now in my third year as a member of the BHA. I am still a firm believer in all its aims, but, with the impatience of youth, I am disillusioned. Although I realise that the influence of the BHA far outweighs its numbers, the movement has only some 3,300 members and has shown a decrease since its separation from the RPA. We are still written off by many as a cranky fringe organisation, as rebels who have never grown up. The only way we can become more influential and be recognised by politicians, the Press and TV is to grow in numbers. At the moment no one is worried if we do not vote for them, watch their TV programme or read their papers. Three thousand people out of a population of 54 million is so insignificant a number as to be ludicrous. If our numbers are to grow, we must strive to become a large, undogmatic movement, covering a much wider sphere of views and opinions. We must accept the Unitarian and the Quaker searching for truth, the Communist looking for a new way of life, the old-style rationalist, the scientist, atheist, the religious Humanist, and everyone who, in the widest sense, believes in the aims of the BHA, which were originally as follows:

"To develop a movement which will spread Humanist ideas and organise its members for fellowship and common action in Great Britain."

However, the Constitution of the BHA is being revised, and the proposed Object which has been formulated, reads:

"The object of the Association is to promote within the British Isles, the advancement and propagation of knowledge with respect to the ideas and principles known as Humanism; that is to say, the moral and social development of the community free from theistic or dogmatic beliefs and doctrines."

If we did as I suggest, we would then have a strong core of members and workers (as in the Labour Party) and be in a position to make popular demands and obtain support from the public.

From this nucleus there can be many independent organisations with their own ideas: the NSS, RPA, Humanist Action, and so on. Many Freethinkers will probably disagree strongly, others will feel that I am a "heretic." I often feel that many members of the BHA secretly want the Humanist Movement to remain a small intellectual association, exclusive and with little power. But I believe in making the world more humane and a better place for *all*. To do this we must take everyone who is sympathetic, interested and unprejudiced enough to listen into our confidence, we must expand and our funds must swell. The income of the Church of England is approaching £50 million a year. Large amounts of money can only be raised from large numbers of people. With more money, we could advertise more, assist charities, and make our presence felt in the community. Please let us work harder for what we believe.

WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS

in association with the
NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

CONGRESS CONCERT

CONSTANCE CUMMINGS

RICHARD AINLEY

BILL OWEN

GEOFFREY BURFORD

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON W.C.1
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4th, 7.30 p.m.

DETERMINISM AND FREE WILL

Michael Gray

Michael Gray (b. 1943) is a statistical clerk with an Insurance Company. He was brought up as a RC and became an atheist at 18. His cynicism (he says) deters him from joining a Secularist-Humanist organisation.

AS MOST ATHEISTS will no doubt already know, if you ask the average Christian any valid question such as "Why was the Temptation of the First Man (metaphorical or otherwise) necessary when god already knew very well that he could not resist?" or "Why did god send his son down to earth to give us a second chance which he knew beforehand we would not take?", the question will usually be answered (or circumvented) by reference to "free will". He will maintain that, once god had given man the chance to redeem himself, he was absolved from any further responsibility, since even though god know what the decision would be, it was still man who made it of his own free will, and thus he has only himself to blame.

This concept of free will is basic to all Christian teaching (and thinking), since without it the doctrines of Fall, Atonement and Redemption, and indeed the concept of sin itself, would be invalid. It may be defined as that gift (acknowledging of course, that everything we possess is a gift from god) which enables us to choose our own course of action at all times and under any circumstances without influence or coercion from any outside force. If, therefore, our choice is influenced by forces over which we have no control, then we cannot be said to have exercised free will.

Chance the main factor

If we consider life more than momentarily, and examine beneath the surface, it soon becomes obvious that the whole course of our lives is determined by a multitude of chance factors over which we can have no influence. Our politics, beliefs, prejudices and loyalties (and our religion) are governed by where we are born what kind of family we are born into, at what period in time and in what country—all factors which we cannot control. We cannot choose our own parents, sex, appearance or abilities, and these factors are basic in determining the course of our lives. **Environment is the only god that rules over us.**

It is not merely a coincidence that most people from "working class" backgrounds (please excuse the outdated term) vote Socialist, while those from the "ruling classes" vote Conservative, or that patriotism inspires most people to declare that their own country (county, city, street, etc.) is the best. People absorb the propaganda of their environment and obviously their immediate surroundings are most influential. The most important, and thus the most dangerous, of these surrounding influences is the family circle, which has the unique opportunity of ingraining its particular beliefs and biases in the most ingenuous and gullible period of our lives—the formative years of childhood. Christianity, and in particular Roman Catholicism, has never hesitated to take advantage of this period to indoctrinate its victims with its pernicious creeds, both in the home and the school, so that its beliefs are imposed upon them before they are mature enough to discriminate between truth and superstition. Catholics usually try to excuse this monstrous brainwashing cam-

paign by maintaining that when a child grows up he can decide of his own free will whether he wishes to continue in the beliefs in which he has been brought up. But how can he think reasonably, logically and with scientific detachment about the existence of god when he has been brainwashed with religion all his life? Obviously he cannot, it would probably never occur to him to try; the choice of beliefs was never his, he was never able to exercise free will.

Even after childhood environment determines every opinion we form, every faith we avow and every decision we make. Our personality and character are formed firstly by heredity (which is merely the combination of a particular set of chance factors) and then by experience. It may be justifiable to say that what a man is, is no more than the sum total of his experiences. If just one event that occurred in his life had not happened, or had happened differently, his whole personality might have been changed. The psychotic, for example, may suffer from a mental disorder as a result of some deep traumatic experience, probably in his childhood. If this tragic event, such as the sudden death of a parent, had not occurred, he might not have developed a psychosis. He did not choose that this tragedy should happen to him—it was the result of random factors—yet his whole life is overshadowed by it; he cannot do anything that is not in some way affected by it.

Free will an illusion

Christians would have us believe that we always have a free choice between right or wrong, black or white. Of course we know that we ourselves make the decision, but the question is *what are the reasons behind our decision?* We can never arrive at really uninfluenced decision, independent of our background and situation. A Catholic would no more think of missing Mass on a Sunday than an atheist would think of going, but if their respective circumstances had been different, the "Catholic" would be still tucked up in bed while the "atheist" was at his Sabbath Day worship.

No man remains the same no matter what his circumstances. Environment changes and we change with it—we learn from experience so that whatever happens changes us in some way, whether it be obvious or subtle, so much so that even if the same thing happened again we would react to it differently. We cannot be said to have exercised "free will". And if free will does not exist then neither does sin, and where there is no sin there is no guilt. Thus the doctrines of the Fall, Original Sin, and Atonement are illogical (not to say unjust) and the Redemption unnecessary. Heaven and Hell are ridiculous concepts and should be relegated to the land of myth and ignorance whence they arose, together with their respective caretakers, God, and Lucifer (which is a pity for I have a sneaking regard for the latter) and all the hierarchy of lesser glorified Bogeymen. Such childish and ignorant beliefs have no place in a modern, progressive, scientific age—an age which, let us hope, will see the final banishment of the superstition that has haunted man since he first began to ask the right questions, and (because of his primitive imagination) to provide all the wrong answers. Then perhaps future happily godless generations may truly look back on our time as the Age of Enlightenment.

FINAL REPORT FROM THE IHEU CONFERENCE IN PARIS

THERE WAS more value in the last two days than in the other four, but I can only refer to a few of what seemed to me the most useful contributions.

David Pollock (UK) wanted Humanists to involve themselves more in both local and national politics. He recommended the "open society" in which divergent beliefs are welcomed. Herr Schrader (Germany) brought us the question of the political division of his country, in which Humanists (and the non-Christian Unitarians) feel more sympathy for the "protestant" East than for Roman Catholic if more affluent West. Dr Spetter (USA) urged the IHEU to help create an **International Humanist Centre for Family Health** with its own literature. He wanted Humanist writers and poets to produce a *Testament of Life*, in order, as he put it, "to celebrate man . . ." And Mr D. Robson (UK) gave some interesting information about the way the **UN Charter of Human Rights** works.

The emphasis was changed a little by Mr E. Wilson (USA) who insists that we can go along with the Catholics "so long as they are going our way"; which, in its oversimplification, ignores all the reasons why some of us believe that because the Catholic way is inevitably different from our own, we are bound to appear, at least to many Catholics, only to be going along theirs! Mr Souza (Brazil) talked of Latin America as one of the last regions to be developed culturally, with its passionate conflicts, imposed doctrines and immense human and social problems. Mrs Goldblum (USA) went back to the subject of communication. "We don't even communicate with each other", she said, and asked what the IHEU had done to implement its resolutions of previous years. It was the responsibility of each one of us to see that our suggestions are dealt with and followed through.

Mr Holter (Norway) was a splendid chairman and perhaps the only man on the platform who welcomed the women speakers. Perhaps he really was one of the few who noticed the unsatisfactory sexual imbalance of the conference. And then we had Mr Van der Wal (Holland) of the IHEU bidding us "to listen", and we went on listening to him telling us, and some of us wondered why he himself seemed loth to hear views different from his own!

Frau Prof. Illig (Germany) spoke a second time of the Catholic battle in her country for educational segregation, of secret Governmental negotiations (all recently dealt with in the *Spiegel*), in spite of a law proclaiming non-segregated education as being best, and of the Catholic victory; of Catholic children being told to seek only Catholic friends, and of the resulting general parental anxiety. Frau Prof. Illig is a teacher at an inter-confessional school. "If the Pope has opened any doors", she said, "it has only been to invite people *in* . . ." She stressed that the rights of parents have been over-valued in comparison with the rights of children. She was followed by another German Humanist, Frau Lazarraga, who referred to Western Germany as a Christian-Catholic dictatorship. She believes that Teilhard de Chardin, Jesuit son of the Church, was ordered to bring confusion to modern science, and even Sir Julian Huxley had given him his blessing. (I was very interested to hear this view confirmed by Prof. Horn (Norway) who is a biologist.) Frau Lazarraga spoke (as had Frau Prof. Illig) without emotionalism when she warned us against any co-operation with the Vatican, which is, she so wisely stressed, **a political power and not just a**

religious community.

This seemed to be forgotten by far too many at the conference; but I for one rejoiced to hear Germans speaking with wisdom about the dangers to which their country was so blind before and between the world wars. "No Humanists can understand the dangers", said Frau Lazarraga, I only hope we can convince her that at least some of us try. "The Vatican wants world domination", she went on. I think it does, and we can respect her for daring to say so in a Conference that was by no means entirely sympathetic to such views.

The women seemed at last to have gathered courage—in spite of a platform that continued to be monopolised by the men. Mme Bellamy (France) gave her own condemnation of the Catholic preaching of nationalism and jingoism, and pointed out that the Pope is not just a "nice sweet old man"; he has a totalitarian government behind him. We should not confuse nice people and good works with evil organisations. Too many people do not dare to denounce the church. Confusion reigns—Dr Bronder (Germany) warned us to be positive and not just point out what bad Humanists other people are. But if we cannot recognise what is wrong, Dr Bronder, how can we affirm what is right and good? M. Lieber (France) reminded us that the Vatican doesn't shoot its refugees "escaping over the wall" and that **the strength of the adversary is founded on our own weakness.** But then I think the German and French women speakers would have agreed with him; it is this weakness in religious Humanists that will surely aid our Catholic adversaries.

Signora Riccardi (Italy) spoke in favour of the happiness of man. While we in Great Britain can discuss premarital sex, in Catholic Italy there is not yet even any divorce. Let there be a **Common Market of Law and of Human Rights**, for sexual education, divorce and the abolition of capital punishment. (She was asked to submit a proposal to the Board.)

Mr McIntyre (USA) gave encouraging news of Ethical Humanist success in New York where a member, Algernon Black, has been chosen to act as public intermediary in charges against the police because of his Humanist impartiality in cases where race and religion are concerned. Another American with a splendid record of achievement in the fight against inhumanity, racialism and persecution, Mr Quigley, called for optimism in spite of what may seem insuperable difficulties. "We are not just anti-Church but *pro-man.*" He wanted the conference to endorse the Vatican-cum-Humanist dialogues, and suggested to me later that a vote be taken. Indeed it might have proved interesting if it had. The German, French and Italian women had certainly aroused *my* hopes that there were other Humanist priorities—and other dialogues that were more important and constructive.

Prof. Horn (Norway) went even further by openly regretting the absence of Secularist-Freethinkers, and he stressed the need for more toleration of diversity *within* the movement. We must try and get **tax exemptions for organised Humanist work**, he suggested, and he wished the IHEU could have a special committee on this subject.

Prof. Dr L. de Coninck (Belgium) missed the whole point of the objections to the Vatican dialogues (which he insists "are not a capitulation") but did at least remind

(Continued on page 262)

TIME FOR A CHANGE

John Beton

John Beton (b. 1925) is an Atheist-Humanist civil servant who feels very strongly that architecture should be a tool for promoting and improving social welfare.

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE EVE, write Katherine Whitehorn in a recent *Observer* article, being female has come to mean being solitary, and a *New Society* article of December, 1963 stated that much of doctors' time on our large housing estates is spent dealing with people's suffering acutely from loneliness and boredom. This "suburban neurosis" was recognised by Professor Carstairs in his 1962 Reith lectures (1). He found, as did the late Hannah Gavron (2), that this was largely caused by the failure of society to provide a constructive rôle for mothers with young children.

Comprehensive statistics are provided by Hannah Gavron's sample London survey, which, though not universally applicable, can be taken as a rough guide to conditions prevailing in our towns today. Of working class families interviewed, 71 per cent were living in rooms, and over 60 per cent were badly housed. In securing accommodation, she quotes John Greve (1962) as stating that it is not large families that are the trouble—"the mere possession of children creates a serious disability, and if wages are low then the chances of renting privately rapidly dwindle". There was no problem for the middle classes in this respect. The volume of traffic in the streets of large cities, together with television and, for tenement families, isolation from the neighbours, prohibits the kind of street life which was so common amongst previous working class generations. 35 per cent of the sample of working class wives felt they had married too young, compared with 21 per cent of the middle class sample. Marriage was seen as a kind of freedom, yet when it was combined with motherhood it became a kind of prison and they then felt their freedom had been restricted before they had really been free at all. Children's play was a constant source of worry to 77 per cent of working class mothers. Housework for all classes tends to expand as the standard of living goes up, and housewives, no matter how arduous housework actually proves to be, do not feel themselves to be at work. Myrdal and Klein (1956), Miss Gavron notes, pointed out that 2,340 m. hours are spent annually by housewives in Sweden on housework, industry using only 1,290 m. hours. This compares with Margaret Mead's quote (3) of 80.57 hours weekly in urban households in America. 68 per cent of the "at home wives" wished they were working, compared with 75 per cent of the middle class, and thoughts about work often conflicted with desires to be good mothers.

What is needed above all, thought Hannah Gavron, is some deliberate attempt to re-integrate women in all their many rôles with the central activities of society. Specifically, the official encouragement of Parent-Teacher Associations along the lines experienced in America, an improvement in facilities for young children—nursery schools, play centres and playgrounds, especially for the under fives, and encouragement of the community to include young children "in".

In his review of the late Lord Raglan's book (4) on the origin of the house, Colin McCall noted his suggestion that the custom of house-building had its origins in the palace—the house is a humbler version of the palace.

Various ceremonies are performed on selection of site, during and after building, in other times and cultures, the present custom of carrying the bride over the threshold surviving to acknowledge the special sanctity of the building. Among the duties of the "queen", now the bride, is keeping the house clean, but Lord Raglan maintains this is a modern version of the much older function of preserving the sanctity of the house by keeping it free from pollution or unholiness. It is custom, not availability, that dictates what materials shall be used.

Replacement of Traditionalism by rational understanding

Professor Carstairs recalls Durkheim, "the pioneer of empirical research in sociology", who devoted years of study to the topic of suicides. He was concerned to show why, during a century of great material progress, the suicide rate increased in almost every European country. He found that the "egoistic", caused by a purely individual despair, and the "anomie", the sense of the loss of social cohesion, were the types of suicide which had shown a tendency to increase. His two criteria for social advance were the replacement of traditionalism by rational understanding and deliberate choice and an extension of self-interest from the individual or a local group to recognition of the common interest of a larger community. He hoped that a new basis, to replace tradition and religion as the source of moral judgments, might be provided by groups of people engaged in a common occupation.

In his broadcast talk on the Home Service in June, 1964, the Rev Paul Oestreicher, speaking of the kibbutzim in Israel, considered that the inhabitants had far more opportunity than in the West of taking part in community life. Co-operation, not competition, was the keynote, and committees of a year's duration were formed from among the members to run each individual kibbutz. The normal care of children is in the hands of kibbutz members trained in child welfare, though this is not always the case (5). Some kibbutzim are devoted solely to agriculture, others operate highly successful industrial enterprises, producing canned food, plywood, motor-scooters, and many even breed carp on a large scale. Significantly, with only 4 per cent of the total population working in them, Israeli kibbutzim contribute 12 per cent of the gross national product (6). Paul Oestreicher found the conditions of living "humane and decent", and a prevailing sense of vitality which he had not found elsewhere.

In his monumental work (7) on community projects in England during the past four hundred years Professor Armytage states in his epilogue that, to be scientific, socialism must change its name and nature, "for it is a creed with an overdraft on the future". He criticizes the Labour Party "for surrendering to the impersonal, management-controlled public corporations", and quotes the *Times*, "since 1919 the British Labour Party has been so intent on extending the authority of the State that it has overlooked the purpose of its existence". Sir Herbert Read is quoted as saying, in 1940, "We shall avoid creating an independent bureaucracy, for that is another form of tyranny, and the individual has no chance of living according to natural laws under such a tyranny. We shall avoid the creation of industrial towns which separate men from the fields and the calm environment of nature. We shall control the machine, so that it serves our natural

(Continued on page 262)

TIME FOR A CHANGE

(Continued from page 261)

needs without endangering our natural powers . . ." Professor Armytage continues, "The regenerative value of these communities, so stressed by their vegetarian, back-to-the-land promoters, is receiving supplementary endorsement from those who are preoccupied with the the ever-increasing problem of mental health. The highly therapeutic atmosphere which prevails in such communities today, and their high level of psychological adjustment, has won the approval of psychologists and psychiatrists".

Earl Russell, in his qualified advocacy (8) of communal living and beauty in architecture, refers to Oxford and Cambridge as retaining the beauty of mediaeval communalism. Interestingly, in a survey of colleges as printed in an article in *New Society* of May, 1963, it was shown that, of a sample of Cambridge students, 68 per cent preferred College Hall or Hostel to lodging or other accommodation,

a number of those opting out being final year students requiring more solitude. Earl Russell considers that the home, being one of the spheres of human activity from which no pecuniary profit is to be expected, is what it is largely because of the profit motive.

One tends to find, broadly speaking, that whilst philosophers are amenable to suggestions as to new styles of living, theologians wish the *status quo* preserved, and town planners are derisory of "utopian concepts". It is to be hoped that politicians, at any rate, and trades unions and businessmen, can be induced to mend their ways.

- (1) *This Island Now* (Hogarth Press).
- (2) *The Captive Wife* (Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- (3) *Male and Female* (Pelican).
- (4) *The Temple and the House* (Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- (5) *The Kibbutz*. Israeli Embassy.
- (6) *Israel Today—The Kibbutz*, No. 27, by Moshe Kerem. Israeli Embassy.
- (7) *Heavens Below* (Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- (8) *In Praise of Idleness* (Allen and Unwin—taken from essay "Architecture and Social Questions").

IHEU CONFERENCE REPORT

(Continued from page 260)

the young that the older Humanists *feel* young and have also been angry and impatient. As for this not-young Humanist, she still is—and was impatient listening to so much unimaginative philosophising that curled drily round the more interesting substance like bread in a week-old sandwich.

Prof. G. D. Parikh (India) made a particularly valuable contribution with the news that his Humanist doctor wife has, in the last 18 months, fitted some 2,000 Inter-Uterine Devices for the Indian campaign for family planning. And he told us how different their problem is from our own, when three children in a family may die before the ages of 10 or 20. If parental anxiety is to be removed, Indians (and presumably all people in a similar situation) need to be encouraged and enabled to aim for health rather than quantity in their families.

By this time the conference was nearly over. Harold Blackham was in the chair, and he outlined the "continuous action" on the part of an understaffed, overworked and often unpaid IHEU that so badly needs money. Mrs Weiss (USA) as the IHEU representative at UNO, is clearly a key figure in this action, and her paper will be published soon in these pages. (I was also delighted to find that she shared my own feminist reactions to the conference, urging me not to be apologetic about them!)

The work of the nine discussion groups was concisely summarised by the leaders. Unfortunately "The Demands of Human Equality" attracted only three people besides Kit Mouat and so never came into existence. And then a Dutch Catholic Priest went up to speak. I must sincerely apologise for not getting his name. He paid us the almost inevitable compliments concerning our earnestness, honesty and solidarity, emphasised the need for eyes to be freed from "scales", and our minds from prejudice and misunderstanding. He declared his opposition to anything in or out of his own church that is "contrary to the fundamental rights of man". He was loudly applauded, but he did not give us any idea as to what rights his church considers "fundamental". He spoke with a gentleness, humility and charm which is often found in those who are—as individuals—superior to the totalitarian organisations to which they belong. But we, surely don't have to ap-

proach Catholicism by saying "Some of our best friends are people . . ." We know what has "happened to Roberts" and what is likely to happen to liberal members of power blocs who wish to destroy some of the power. We may, with all our hearts, wish such priests the courage and humility to develop their humanity in spite of their Church, but we need not pretend optimism. Nor need we feel it our first duty to help them rather than the Secular-Humanism to which we are committed and against which the Church of Rome (and probably even this Dutch priest's confessor) are fighting fully armed.

Prof. Dr J. P. van Praag (Chairman of the IHEU) expressed the hope that the dialogues will continue, and I'm sure that if they do there will be nothing but benefit in them—for the Church of Rome and its new image. Indeed, if the Pope had been present, I am sure he would have joined in the ovation that followed both these speakers. Perhaps it is hoped that Dr van Praag will be invited to "observe" at the next Vatican Council? He later referred to the contributions being made by various countries to the all-Humanist project in Bihar, Great Britain (i.e., the BHA) giving £860. No mention was made of any other British Humanist Organisation. When I later drew his attention to the support given by the NSS (never mind the HLN(I)!) he seemed barely to be conscious of our existence. He promised to make good his omission—at the next International Conference.

The general summing up by Mr McCoy (USA) of the whole conference, with its blend of wit, observation, appreciation and stimulation was splendid. **If our ideals are to be translated into action, he reminded us, then only we can do it.** We need not be discouraged. Conferences, he said, are "rather like sexual intercourse with an elephant; there is not much pleasure in it, one feels crushed and nothing happens for three years . . ." Let us hope that everyone left Paris determined drastically to decrease the period of gestation. As for me, I went with my family to the Panthéon to wink at Voltaire, whose lively statue stands in the dimly lit crypt among the distinguished dead of France, so many of whom were rationalists. I wish I had not felt that somehow we haven't done all we could from where he left off. There is, however, for everyone who feels this, only one answer: we must do more. Meanwhile I am grateful to have made so many new friends at one Conference whom I hope to meet again before another.

THE EDITOR.

FREETHINKER

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

National Secular Society. Details of membership 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. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International): send s.a.e. to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

OUTDOOR

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

Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street), 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.: Messrs. COLLINS, DUIGNAN, MILLS and WOOD.

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

British Humanist Association, Fourth Annual Conference, City of Leicester College of Education, August 26th-29th. RICHARD HAUSER, MARGARET KNIGHT, JOE SANDERS, and MICHAEL NICHOLSON. Details: 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, September 25th, 3 p.m. Annual Re-union. Guest of Honour: Professor A. J. AYER.

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.

THE OLD GUARD REPLIES

Francis J. Corina

"I AM DISILLUSIONED", you say, Clive Godfrey. But disillusionment can be good thing, for it often precedes the dawn of enlightenment. From the moment when our illusions suffer their first knock we really begin to understand the perpetual conflict of interest and forces in the struggle for existence. Don't worry about being considered a heretic, even among Humanists. Every movement needs its heretics. And your ideas are not really heretical. They have been tried before—and failed.

Co-operation by our movement with other movements that are religious, or strongly influenced by religious tradition, does not work. Freethinking atheism must be a catalyst, a force that works on other modes of thought (basically religious) without allowing those modes to modify the atheism. Otherwise atheism has little or no value, and cannot lead to a developed Humanism. Think of Malcolm Muggeridge, and other like him where scepticism, "co-operating" with religious thought, as ended in the surrender of the scepticism. Individual cases, it is true, but valid examples of what would happen to a movement under the same influences.

Working with political parties? Yes, as individuals many of us do. But not as a movement. You have clearly studied quite a lot, but what about political and social history? During this century alone we have seen the "progressive" Labour party and the TUC turn their backs on those Secularist aims they once supported. It is the bitter experience of Freethinkers in these movements that "co-operation" for our aims is always of the silent kind—"Keep your mouth shut, atheist. We mustn't offend our religious members". And this got worse as time went on. Watch out for Harold Wilson reading the lesson at church on the Sunday of the next Labour party conference. Even the British Association for the Advancement of Science patronises this sort of humbug.

You can't beat 'em by joining 'em

Notice how even the "materialistic" Communists are now trucking with the Vatican. This is surely the Marxist contradiction of all contradictions—materialism (!) shaking hands with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost of Superstition! Still, anything works when one is prepared to "co-operate". Even Tito has opened his doors to a Papal ambassador. Will he eventually hand over his schools to the Church?

The spectacle of some British Humanists engaging in dialogue with the Vatican is about the saddest example I can bring to mind. Clever word, "dialogue", but it still means talking things over.

I am not attacking you, Clive. I've always been on the side of the young. But if you wish to remain an atheist and do useful work for Humanism as an alternative to superstition, you must not fall for that idiotic modern slogan, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em". We've got to beat 'em, because **you can only join them on their terms.** So be glad we have an independent movement, not to co-operate with superstition, but to fight it. It's the only way. An honest man can neither co-operate nor compromise with fundamental untruth.

WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY CONGRESS DINNER

On SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3rd, 1966, at 7 p.m.

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Christian Ritual: A Survival of Phallic Sorcery.—"The priest takes the Paschal Taper and plunges it thrice into the Font, singing each time on a higher note, 'May the power of the Holy Spirit descend into the fullness (i.e., the immaculate womb) of this Font!' And the Taper is finally lifted out of the water.

The symbolism of the immersion of the Taper in the 'immaculate womb' of the Font is very obviously phallic. Medieval artists were not afraid to represent the conception of Christ by the Holy Spirit in the figure of the dove with its beak in a tube which passed under the skirts of the Virgin." (A. W. Watts, *Myth and Ritual in Christianity*, p. 179, London 1954.)

Excerpted by G. S. SMELTERS

GENTENARY LECTURE

Elizabeth Collins

ONE OF THE outstanding events celebrating the National Secular Society's centenary year was the last lecture in the series *The Meaning and Value of Freethought* held at Conway Hall, London, on August 5th, and at which the large hall had to be used to accommodate the considerable audience. An impressive panel of speakers on *Freethought and the Arts* included John Calder the publisher, Oswald Blakeston, poet, literary and art critic, Peter Cotes, the well-known producer in the theatre and television, and Donald Ogden Stewart recognised as a successful playwright both in America and Britain.

David Tribe, President of the National Secular Society, lecturer and writer was in the chair. In his opening address Mr Tribe stressed the importance of the problem of censorship today, and it was of special significance that we had as a speaker this evening John Calder whose latest publication *Last Exit to Brooklyn* was to be the subject of a private prosecution by Sir Cyril Black, MP for Wimbledon, that self-constituted ever watchful guardian of British morals. Having failed to get the Director of Public Prosecutions to move in the matter, he had himself decided to take action against Mr Calder in order to get the book banned. It had therefore been decided to have some dozen copies of the book on display in the hall for sale, and the police had been notified. Sir Cyril, Mr Tribe continued, is the Prince of Purity, a Governor of the Catholic Ursuline Girls' Convent school in Wimbledon, Chairman of Christian Fellowship, and Moral Defence Association, all with accent on purity. John Calder was responsible for organising special Writers' Conferences, he was fearless as a publisher and did exciting things, without which there could be no progress.

John Calder then spoke of the philistine tendencies of these prosecutions and attacks upon publishers with liberal associations. When life gets harder people are inclined to be less liberal, and small groups of MPs are apt to try and stop liberal thought in deference to local parties with narrow prejudices. Censorship, although ostensibly operated on moral grounds, is a political instrument used to prevent people living according to their own commonsense. Increasingly artists have found it necessary to shock people into realising what life is about. Baudelaire was only one example of those not willing to be a paid hireling of society. It is in the nature of the artist, writer and musician to go against the tendency of his times, he has to shock in order to make people think, the apple of knowledge used to stir their conscience and to expose social evils. Sexuality is always wrongly described by those of limited mentality, and they are to be pitied. Censorship is based on authoritarianism, and people like Sir Cyril Black to whom works of art that shock into awareness of social evils are little frightened men, and the biggest enemy of progress. Mr Calder issued a challenge to Sir Cyril Black to meet him in debate on the important issue of cultural freedom.

Mr Ogden Stewart also spoke out strongly on this problem of censorship from his Hollywood experience. There it was definitely political. Black lists were kept and things that America did not want to hear were suppressed. As Freethinkers we must strenuously fight these attacks on freedom of expression which are aimed at preventing

people from saying what they want to say. Anyhow he considered the principle of censorship all wrong.

Oswald Blakeston dealt very ably and in some detail, with the connection between Freethought, Humanism and the Arts. He stressed the rôle of the artist in our lives as an expert in integration. We need the artist to give us strength to be happy. Freethinkers know how important it is to resist—to meet the challenges. Happiness is all-important which we must perpetually work for. Art speaks to sensitive people and the Arts are our storehouses of values. Our duty is a constant re-thinking of private and popular art, both great and small.

Peter Cotes took the line that with regard to some of the books and plays today one could go rather too far in scraping the barrel to produce the objectionable. The tendency was to go from the kitchen sink into the lavatory, and even to further descriptions, and items of very questionable taste. Speaking of plays with which he had more concern, he emphasised the importance of their proper structure, instead of the ones so often sketchily knocked together in order to shock. The quotation he finally read from Sean O'Casey made his point.

WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS (in association with the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY)

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

LONDON—SEPTEMBER 1st—SEPTEMBER 5th, 1966

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, WC1

(by kind permission of the Committee)

Thursday, September 1st

2.30 p.m. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (Private)

7.30 p.m. ORGANISING COMMITTEE (Private)

Friday, September 2nd

10.0 a.m. INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL (Private)

7.30 p.m. PUBLIC SESSION

FREETHOUGHT IN THE FUTURE

HAROLD PINTER MARGARET KNIGHT

MICHAEL FOOT, MP PROFESSOR HYMAN LEVY

PROFESSOR POMEAU DAVID TRIBE

Saturday, September 3rd

9.30 p.m.—5 p.m. PUBLIC SESSION

FREETHOUGHT IN THE PAST

F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

PROFESSOR WALTER ARNSTEIN DAVID TRIBE

PROFESSOR O. LUTAUD DR G. CONFORTO

H. FREISTUHLER PROFESSOR POMEAU

Saturday, September 3rd 7 p.m.

CONGRESS DINNER

THE HORSE SHOE HOTEL, TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, WC1

Sunday, September 4th

10 a.m.—5 p.m. PUBLIC SESSION

FREETHOUGHT IN THE FUTURE

7.30 p.m. CONCERT

Monday, September 5th (Public)

9.30 a.m. CLOSING SESSION (RESOLUTIONS)

2.00 p.m. INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL (Private)

3.00 p.m. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (Private)