

FREETHINKER

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FREE SPEECHES

SOME TIME AGO Marghanita Laski wrote an excellent article in the *Guardian* about the problems of buckshee lecturers, and Mrs Diane Munday supported her in a letter which ended, "It would be interesting to know whether speakers who charge for their services are treated with more respect". The situation doesn't seem to have improved. The complaints extend from minor discourtesy to something that is hard to distinguish from meanness.

It all starts with the invitation, and it may be very politely and charmingly worded, asking a speaker to speak, even to choose a date and subject. One feels that there might be an RSVP somewhere that is not immediately noticeable. There is certainly no stamped addressed envelope, so it is rather like an invitation to a party. This is a delusion. It will probably not be in the least like a party, not even the sort of party you might happen to like if you liked parties. The invited "guest" replies, grateful for the opportunity to meet yet another group, association or organisation, while inwardly deciding that they probably couldn't get So-and-So and so need "helping out". She probably forgets to ask where the Milliners' Hall (or Laburnum Crescent or the secondary modern school) is if driving down the London road in the dark. And she had better remember before it is too late, for the chances are that no one will be bothered to inform here. If she is very lucky she may be sent a map, and, if even luckier, it will be to scale and intelligible even on a pouring or snowing January night.

The invitation, of course, might be to quite another part of the country, a part that is no more familiar than, say, Liechtenstein to someone who has never crossed the channel. There is no mention of any expenses being paid for fares or petrol. It is certainly most unwise to take this for granted. You are, after all, the "guest" speaker. One doesn't ask for the train fare to a party.

During the weeks that follow (that is, if the invitation isn't a rush-job) different people will react (and have to react) differently. Some may already have a stock of suitable scripts. Others may be expert enough to speak off the

cuff, to have facts and figures at their finger-tips and an untroubled memory. It is quite possible, however, that the speaker may spend many hours, maybe even weeks, on preparing a talk, with visits to libraries and books ordered especially for the occasion. Other activities will be put aside. They may even be money-making activities, so that the time spent on preparing a talk is actually money lost. Never mind, it is all in the cause of Secular-Humanism, and that is a good cause.

The evening comes. The children are bundled into bed without their usual stories. Or a husband's supper is laid out, cold, like the corpse of a tiring day, for his return to an empty house, and the drive or journey begins. As likely as not having found the actual street and building (where streets are labelled in too-small print and buildings unnumbered), there will be no one in sight to say what happens next. Could this be the wrong evening? The wrong place? Goodness, why on earth did one ever accept the invitation, or rather, agree to take on what by now is an undoubted chore, whatever the cause. Eventually someone turns up and says, "Are you Miss X? Miss Y who wrote to you can't be here, but I'll take you in . . ." She doesn't introduce herself. Now you are among total strangers. Are you ready to try and put Humanism across simply but firmly? Ready to cope with a crowd of people who have never really met an atheist? Ready to cope with hecklers? Even if you are not, it's too late now. Only if you are very lucky will you be shown the cloakroom, although you may have been travelling for hours, and by now Miss whateverhernameis is yards ahead, hurrying down corridors and up stairs while you try and catch up and your breath.

An audience has half-gathered. You go in. No one says where you are to sit, and the woman who met you goes off to greet someone else. You look at your watch and sit on a chair by the wall. Five minutes and you are due to speak, and hardly anyone seems to have come. Anything may happen next. You may find that the coven carries on its own private rituals of minutes and notices while you sit, wondering if the children are asleep. This may go on for half an hour, and you may (as Diane Munday pointed out) be left with the tag end of the group's busy evening to put Humanism across. Or someone may bring you a cup of coffee and ask you to pay a shilling for it, "for the funds". You may find yourself launched at once rather uncertainly into your paper, "Mrs X is going to speak to us about . . . what was it, oh yes" (looking down at her notes) "Humanism". Clap, clap, clap and away we go.

Surely the minimum of hospitality should be a glass of water and an ash tray for smokers? If you ask for one

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or both of these, it may cause a major upheaval while keys for the canteen are lost and found.

And then it's all over, the talk and the questions. Someone says (often rather stunned by the very nature of the talk), "Well, thank you, Mrs X. I'm sure you have given us a lot to think about", and then goes on about the Jumble Sale.

"The party's over . . ." as Peggy Lee would say. You look round for the door, wonder if you can work out the route back in reverse, and you are half-way home before you realise that no one has offered you even 6d towards the petrol or the railway ticket.

Free speech with a vengeance!

Sometimes a thank-you note as charming as the original

invitation arrives, and this just about makes up for everything. You may even be invited to "put in a claim" for expenses (even if at the same time you are made to feel a cross between Shylock and Macduff if you do). You really want to forget the whole business and get back to some more useful work, but perhaps you should put in that claim . . . The 5s could always go to a Humanist project if you can really afford to work so often for nothing.

Those people who read this and who are model "hosts", who not only send a s.a.e. and a map, but welcome and water their guest speakers, and even dine them beforehand, let this reassure them just how very welcome their kindness and courtesy is and what a difference it makes.

A PAINFUL DILEMMA

William Bynner (b. 1900) is an ex-Congregationalist who finally accepted an agnostic/atheism in his middle-age. He is a retired civil servant who has four grandchildren living near Holy Loch and has been in Brixton goal for Committee of 100 activities. Recently he was appointed as Treasurer for the SPES at Conway Hall Humanist Centre.

WHAT ARE AGEING CLERGYMEN to do, who, faced by the increase of scepticism and scientific knowledge, are overwhelmed by their powerful appeals and who, wishing to be as honest as possible in these difficult and embarrassing circumstances, admit their heretical beliefs to a professed atheist or agnostic like myself or John Calder (whose letters were published in *The Scotsman*).

Their dilemma is a painful one, once they have admitted to themselves that they are engaged in a form of mental prostitution, not so different from that of the woman taken in adultery. They have, over the years, been reduced to a comfortable routine observance of their parochial duties, but the advent (if I may use the term) of a high powered recruiting officer in the person of Billy Graham, has shaken them out of their apathy.

The ranks of the clergymen of non-conformist churches in England may be likened to an army in disorder following a defeat on the battlefield, which tries to close its ranks in order to present once more a united front to the enemy. Of course some clergymen still believe what they preach, but many do not, and they are sometimes honest enough to admit it. The higher level of general education, the increasing knowledge of scientific processes, even the historical criticism of the Bible and the light shed by recent discoveries of the way Christianity began, all point to a lack of veracity in traditional theological teaching, to such a degree that this is now largely rejected by, for instance, the Bishop of Woolwich. In his book *Honest to God* we have a clear example of an honest man trying to reconcile the remnants of his tattered beliefs with facts which many people accepted long ago, and succeeding only in getting himself hopelessly muddled in the process, as he partly admits in his preface.

This penetration of their theological fortress is a heavy blow to the Churches' ranks, and provides the obvious main incentive to the drive for unity, experienced by almost all denominations. The structure of the Roman Catholic Church appears the least shaken, as its priests remain the best disciplined in the field. The reasons for this include their understanding of the psychology of their adherents,

with the resulting catering for their needs; for instance their admission of the feminine principle in the worship of the Mother of God, and also the Purgative nature of the Confessional: two powerful considerations which their competitors lack.

Observing from the outside is a fascinating exercise for those like myself who were brought up in the non-conformist beliefs. I was a Sunday School teacher at 16 and a member of the Congregational church at 21. The diplomatic exchanges now taking place may lead to the splitting of the Methodists 3 to 1; indeed this is almost certain if they accept the Anglican take-over bid, with the proposed laying-on of hands by the Bishops so as to give a subtle indication of the indulgent father welcoming the return of the Prodigal Son. The Congregational! Churches are engaged in talks intended to bring about a more closely-knit organisation of their independent units; and in Scotland, where sectarian feelings run far more deeply than in England, there is a proposal to unite the Anglican Church with the Presbyterian Church, although this is not likely to happen for a number of years yet. The courtship of Rome by the C of E is hampered by the Constitutional difficulty inherent in the Establishment of the latter, a difficulty unlikely to be surmounted for many years to come.

In our dealings with Rome, we Humanists would do well to keep in mind its tendency to a Machiavellian attitude of not letting its right hand know what its left is doing. Whether serious negotiation from a position of numerical inferiority is worth while is a debatable question, but little is lost unless some point of principle is surrendered; that of course would be unforgivable.

It may or may not be only a coincidence that the recent RC success in obtaining an increased grant of 5 per cent for the upkeep of denominational schools followed soon after the recent talks with our own Humanist representatives, but that provides a good instance of the kind of pitfall to beset the unwary. Any more such obvious tactical defeats are calculated adversely to affect the morale of our own supporters.

I find the negotiations between the various sections of absorbing interest, and these will certainly continue to hold the field for the next five to 10 years. Meanwhile my clergyman friend faces problems, report his lack of success in follow-up visits to juvenile converts of the Billy Graham Crusade while I sympathise with his difficulties and lend him my copy of the *Humanist*.

W. Bynner

SECULAR EDUCATION CONGRESS

THE PRESIDENT of the National Secular Society and the Chairman and individual members of the Confederation of Associations for the Advancement of State Education represented Britain at the International Conference on Secular and Popular Education in Paris, July 18-24. This was held at the initiative of 33 international educationists including M. Jean Rostand, Sir Julian Huxley, Sir Mark Oliphant, Mr Lionel Elvin, Professor A. J. Ayer, Miss Brigid Brophy and leaders of POAU (United States) and the *Mouvement Laïque de Langue Française* (Canada).

"At a time when international relations are still all too often governed by force," began the Statement of Principle "when sectarianism still obstructs the coming together of mankind, and when freedom of opinion—though formally recognised by most Constitutions at present in force—is still frequently ill-respected or totally denied—the International League for Child and Adult Education deems it urgently necessary to call together every staunch supporter of freedom and democracy, without which no progress is possible." It concluded: "In those States where private schools have been set up, their existence must not give rise to angry squabbles; but if discriminatory practices are to be excluded from the national ideal, public funds can be granted only to public and non-discriminatory educational services."

The congress was financed by UNESCO, the French Ministry for Youth and Sport, and the *Ligue Française de l'Enseignement*, the organisers. Like the NSS the French League is celebrating its centenary this year. Its founder was Jean Macé (1815-94), teacher, deputy, senator, internationalist, who lived to see secular education come to France in 1882, though not the separation of church and state in 1905. An international federation had a short life in 1889, but the present *Ligue Internationale* dates from 1957.

An international conference is a stimulating and yet melancholy event. Despite modern equipment it demonstrates the formidability of the language barrier. A spokesman of the International League of Esperantist Educationists was present to tell us about the contribution of Esperanto to education, but had to tell us this in French. A truly international language seems as far away as ever. Official interpreters did not always eliminate difficulties. "Permanent education" (further or adult education extended throughout life) is a virtually meaningless translation of *l'éducation permanente*. In the English speaking world only England is out of step with "public school", but "popular" and "secular" education were terms used by delegates with apparently varying meanings. Some of them, of course, came from countries where universal education or sporting facilities or independence of universities from governmental intervention were not guaranteed. Sometimes they came with an extreme anti-clericalism, from seeing the Church nakedly at work in its traditional rôle of friend of the privileged classes; sometimes they were so pleased to get the 3 Rs a few catechisms seemed neither here nor there.

For many of the 800 delegates it was the first visit to Europe and an occasion for set-piece oratory. From those concerned with "secular" education as understood in Britain there was much historical recollection: the Paris Commune of 1871, Macé, Sarmiento, Victor Hugo, Maria Montessori, Francisco Ferrer. Great as were the battles in the past the battle in the future against the Vatican Council Declaration on Christian Education promises to be even

David Tribe

greater, but nobody, to the best of my knowledge, even referred to it. Words of warning did however come from M. Lamarque, French Vice-President of the International League and President of a European CAEDEL, and a delegate of the German Humanists. They pointed out that the Catholic Church is increasing in influence within a framework of growing administrative law and institutional pluralism, its propaganda being conducted under the banner of "parental rights".

Besides the plenary sessions there were commissions on exchange visits and cultural tours, expressive activities, cinema and television, sport, youth considered as a social class, and a particularly lively session on the position of women. There were tours of Paris and Versailles, a visit to the champagne country, a banquet at and tour of Rheims, and cultural events. With local support and a large Latin American contingent, the French-Spanish cultural tradition tended to dominate proceedings, but there were Communist delegates and a slogan from Thomas Paine in the congress hall, beside equally vast quotations from Macé and Sarmiento. Linking France with Britain and the United States he said, timelessly: "When opinions are free either in matters of government or religion truth will finally and powerfully prevail". We thought at once of Spain and Portugal, whose delegates had not been allowed to come.

WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS

(in association with the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY)

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

LONDON—SEPTEMBER 1st—SEPTEMBER 5th, 1966
CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, WCI

(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 a.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

Sunday, September 4th

10 a.m.—5 p.m. PUBLIC SESSION

FREETHOUGHT IN THE FUTURE

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)

EDITOR'S CORRECTION:

Mr Vernon (PRO of the BHA) informs me that my reference to an "all male" Board of Directors of the IHEU is incorrect and that there is, in fact, a Mrs Klein who is Assistant Secretary. I would like to point out that on the official documents issued by the IHEU in Paris, Mrs Klein's name *does not appear* on the all-male list of 19 members on the "Board of Directors". "Curiouser and curiouser!" said Alice.

NEWS AND NOTES

MARGARET KNIGHT has contributed an article giving the Secularist arguments, "Should the State Back Religious Education?" to *New Society*, while Colin MacInnes is giving the anti-Secularist case. Meanwhile Bill McLroy (the ever-helpful and indomitable Gen. Secretary of the NSS) has been quoted in the *Catholic Herald* (July 29) from an article on the same subject in *Sigma* (the magazine of the Northern Counties College, Newcastle). Meanwhile DAVID TRIBE has, as President of the NSS, issued two Press Releases: one welcomed the recommendations of the Archbishop of Canterbury's group on matrimonial problems, expressed the hope that this unofficial report (*Putting Asunder: A Divorce Law for Contemporary Society*) will soon gain official status, and pointed out that Secular Humanists have been making these points for 100 years or more. The second release concerned the Beatles and emphasised that "even if Lennon were talking nonsense" and even "if it were blasphemy" he has a right to blaspheme. "Blasphemy is a worn out crime".

"Hard to swallow . . ."

BUT THE *Catholic Herald* states that "if a world-wide opinion poll could be taken, we should probably find that John Lennon was speaking the bare truth". But then hasn't this always been a crime against Christianity if the faith were challenged by it? And so the good Christians of the USA Bible Belt, the Ku Klux Klan, South Africa and Spain are banning and burning Beatle records. As Mr Tribe pointed out "fortunately for Lennon secularism has today outlawed the stake even there".

But Obscenity means sex—not bigotry, of course . . .

DETECTIVES from Scotland Yard have seized 200 reproductions of 40 drawings by Aubrey Beardsley from a shop in Regent Street. If you want to see the originals of many of these, you can go to the Victoria and Albert Museum; that is, unless Mary Whitehouse and her gang of Grundies have got there first. This self-appointed Guardian of our Morals has been pressing for a council composed of representatives of churches, women's groups, magistrates, doctors, educationalists, parents, etc., to "reflect reactions and opinions of the country . . ." and we know what that means. The Postmaster General, Mr Edward Short, has written to Mrs Whitehouse saying that the idea is being studied "as part of the Government's general review of broadcasting policy . . ." Good luck to you, Mrs Avril Fox. I wonder someone doesn't suggest closing the libraries and schools and issuing blinkers on the NHS.

It's no good taking to your hospital bed to escape—

BECAUSE (the *Catholic Herald* reports) "clergymen are to play a bigger rôle in hospitals. They can make a remarkable contribution to the improvement of the patient's physical condition, as well as to the satisfying of his spiritual needs". They are already enough of a menace, surely? Mind you, if the only audience the clergy can persuade are the captive sick, half conscious or dying, I suppose we should be able to smile. It's not nearly so funny, however, when you actually *are* sick—and in hospital. Let us hope that Humanist organisations make the strongest protest.

The fight for (and against) reform continues

ROMAN CATHOLICS are outraged at the progress made by the reformers of the Abortion Law, not least, of course, the men, who really can not be expected to understand the situation any more than women can perhaps

fully appreciate some of the predominantly male sexual problems. A RC doctor's wife who has collected 1,400 signatures to fight the bill proves however that some women can be equally callous. Catholics are demanding the right for their medical servants of the public to be given the right to "opt out" of any reform that may take place. One thing is certain: all doctors on the NHS list should be compelled to state their religion so that we patients need not find ourselves unwittingly in the hands of a Roman Catholic. With Jehovah's Witnesses refusing to take or give blood transfusions, Christian Scientists refusing to have doctors at all and what seems like the majority of doctors hidebound in their medical (and religious) orthodoxies however dedicated their services, perhaps this is just the incentive we need—to stay healthy at all costs.

"When in Rome . . .?"

THE *Guardian* (August 8) reports from Rome that a member of the Italian Government has asked for birth control to be legalised and, in some cases, encouraged. He is Signor Virginio Bertinelli, Minister for Bureaucratic Reform (couldn't we do with one of those?) It is reported that

"The impossibility of preventing unwanted pregnancies forces the Italians to lower their birth rate, with hundreds of thousands—and perhaps more than a million—of clandestine abortions. It is certain that several thousand women lose their lives each year and that many thousands more are afflicted by acute and chronic illnesses following illegal abortions. No civilised State can take responsibility for encouraging, or consenting to, so much suffering due to antiquated laws . . ."

Please note, Mr St John Stevas. I suppose this is one way of populating "heaven" (that is, *if* women who have had illegal abortions aren't disqualified even from that). And the Italians just want contraceptives, not abortion law reform. That will come later, after a good many more thousands of women have died for their gruesome and merciless faith.

There are always other ways to die

CARDINAL SHEHAN of Baltimore has issued a pastoral letter called *Peace and Patriotism*. James O'Gara (*Catholic Herald*, August 2) writes, ". . . a limited war is the right kind of war. The Church has always tried to civilise warfare to impose moral restrictions on violence. The drift to unrestrained warfare, to total war, is a drift towards barbarism . . ." The Cardinal writes, "we must constantly recall that only on moral grounds can our course in Vietnam be just. If our means become immoral our cause will have been betrayed . . ." The "cause" of course is Catholic victory, and "moral means" anything that will enable the war to continue until that victory is won.

Better than nothing for some . . .

THE *Evening Standard* (August 10) reported that "young British migrants to Australia now liable to immediate call-up for National Service will in future not be called until they have lived there for two years . . ."

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord . . ."

THE TRAGEDY of August 12th, when three police officers were murdered, has brought not only deep sympathy for the bereaved and a determination that our police shall be better able to protect themselves, but also the demand for a return of hanging. It can be argued that no prison officers should be expected to keep such murderers alive, day after day. Who then, should be expected

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ETHICAL HUMANISM AND THE UNITED NATIONS

Mrs W. M. Weis

Mrs Weis is the International Humanist and Ethical Union representative at the United Nations Organisation. The following is the script of a talk she gave to the IHEU Paris conference in July, 1966.

MY PREMISE TODAY is that the United Nations is a source of Ethical-Humanist values, which we can easily find among the many items in the United Nations agenda. If we accept this thesis we advance our own cause and at the same time strengthen factors that lead to peaceful growth and change. As we examine the programmes of the IHEU member organisations, we find that they reflect in varying degrees positions taken by IHEU which parallel some UN resolutions. It is therefore mandatory that we make known to our members the places in the UN where these ideas call for IHEU support.

Believing as we do in the worth of each individual and our obligations to help him develop his potentialities, we welcome the opportunities of finding these areas and using them to further specific projects and to solidify and strengthen our position as Ethical-Humanists. Having made such an assumption, I shall now, with a few examples, sustain it.

The IHEU and its member organisations have long been active in improving ethnic and racial relationships. The powerful 1965 UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination provides us with a comprehensive tool to carry forward these objectives. Read it, study it, and, if you implement only a few of its objectives, you will not only be helping people on their march to equality but, by improving the quality of human relations locally and nationally, you will also be helping to ease world tensions, a service sorely needed in the international community.

The Rights of Children and Youth

The United Nations is presently engaged in preparing a draft convention on Elimination of Religious Discrimination. The Human Rights Commission has currently forwarded a preamble and eight articles to EDOSOC for approval. The articles so far completed have value, but they fail to formulate clearly one provision on which the IHEU submitted an intervention: namely freedom for a child, when he reaches maturity, to choose his own philosophical way of life. We believe it is our obligation to have the IHEU consider the remaining draft articles which the Human Rights Commission will redraft next year and have our own views included when suitable.

The IHEU has long voiced its concern with overpopulation and the need for family planning. The IHEU submitted an intervention in this respect to the Population Commission. The gradual acceptance of this concept by the United Nations bodies, which this year burst forth in various commissions and in FAO voicing this concern, has been encouraging. However, we were again put on the alert by a recent partial retreat by WHO and UNICEF. And we caution you not to desist in your efforts and to continue to be vigilant. Ethical-Humanists must also help dispel an unfortunate insecurity that makes some of the developing nations wonder if family planning is indeed a form of genocide.

Fortunately, the Young World Assembly, which convened in Rome in October, 1965, to celebrate the

twentieth anniversary of FAO, issued a Young World Manifesto. The Manifesto exhorts youth to do many constructive things, and in one paragraph states:

"If you are a young parent, resolve to end the suffering of children. Know, too, how to plan the size of your family, so that the progress of all is not compromised". It ends with the words: "Our generation has power and knowledge that no previous generation has ever had. With these we must create a world in which the human spirit is set free from hunger and want, forever."

Although it may often be difficult to stand side by side with others as an Ethical-Humanist in the local community, it is a matter of course in the international world, where representatives of differing economic, social and political societies are working for the same projects. The last time the IHEU stood visibly with others was at the Human Rights Commission, where we were one of the fifteen organisations submitting a statement in support of the proposal for the establishment of a United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights. This proposal had been submitted by Costa Rica to the Twentieth General Assembly, which referred it to the Twenty-second session of the Human Rights Commission. If you approve of the creation of such a post, make it known to the UN delegate from your own country, and, in addition, ask the IHEU to submit an intervention to the next session of the Human Rights Commission.

The Social Commission is undergoing a change that needs our scrutiny. Over the years it had come to realise that, to achieve social justice and progress, communities and peoples must be viewed not from one angle alone, but from many angles; and that social, economic and political aspects are all parts of the whole of a person's life. It was heartening to see Mrs Heroma-Meilink, a member of the Dutch Humanist League, on the Netherlands delegation to the Social Commission. We must ask her to alert the IHEU to any items in the revised programme that need IHEU attention. We note particularly the Conference on Social Welfare Ministers proposed for 1968, and the preparatory committee of experts which will meet before that date.

Disarmament

The IHEU Board recently passed a resolution on disarmament. The problem of disarmament has many aspects, all of which we must consider. We must not forget in our interest in disarmament that it would be unrealistic and unwise to discount the valid concern of safeguarding national security. The economics of disarmament to which nations and individuals have given thought, and on which the UN has useful, informative documents to which it is adding all the time, raise the question of probable economic dislocations, with their social, educational and political implications which will come with disarmament. As IHEU members we must be ready to bring our thinking and acting into play when the transition begins, so that the path to disarmament can be effectively pursued.

Feed the Minds

There are many more concrete, practical evidences in the UN family where IHEU aspirations and convictions are manifest. I must mention UNESCO's campaign for world literacy, actively supported by the UN family and many NCO's. Even before UNESCO was conceived, Dr

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ETHICAL HUMANISM AND THE UNITED NATIONS

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D. S. Muzzey, a revered leader in the Ethical Movement, blazed an Ethical-Humanist path by writing history textbooks that were factual, and, without being unpatriotic, for he was a great United States patriot, was able to give an accurate picture of historical events. Dr Muzzey overcame the recriminations you can well imagine he received. And he remained on the faculty of Columbia University until his retirement. With the universal cry for new textbooks containing more suitable material for the numbers of children and adults now learning to read, it would be

desirable for the IHEU to see that new material reaching the new literates will build the kind of international climate to which we aspire.

The UN remains persistently with projects it has initiated until the projects come to fruition. The UN then reviews them year by year, carrying them to completion. This ability to follow through and to sustain objectives is one that we might note and emulate. It gives conviction and meaning to action taken. Sincerity, tenacity and loyalty in furthering causes designed to benefit humanity has an Ethical-Humanist ring and bespeaks an approach we approve and in which we, too, as Ethical-Humanists want to excel.

G. W. FOOTE—THE WRITER

H. Cutner

LIKE JOHN M. ROBERTSON, his famous contemporary G. W. Foote, must have been born with a pen in his mouth. He came to London from Plymouth in 1868 with his friend J. M. Wheeler, and he soon began to make his mark, contributing to Charles Bradlaugh's *National Reformer*, and other Freethought journals, as well as speaking for the Cause. His passionate advocacy of Freethought never left him—nor his love for English and French literature; indeed, he was always ready to praise a good writer, Christian or not. He called Newman "a great scholar, and a magical master of English . . . the purest stylist and the greatest theologian in our language". Foote had no use for Roman Catholicism, but he "could kiss the hand that wielded the pen".

His, earliest pamphlet which has come my way is *Secularism Re-stated*, which was published in 1874—the result of some hard thinking about a famous and exceptionally clever debate between Holyoake and Bradlaugh on "Secularism and Atheism", held in 1870. The gist of it was whether Secularism led to Atheism or not—Bradlaugh contending that it did, and Holyoake, that it did not. The reasons deduced by these two champions for their case are far too long to be condensed here, but Foote, who was all for Secularism at one time, found it difficult to dismiss Bradlaugh's Atheism; he felt that his own "unprejudiced" criticism might be of use so that "Secularism itself may fully emerge with precise lineaments and characteristics", not at all a bad objective for a young man of twenty-four. His keen criticism could hardly be bettered, though I suspect that the followers of the two champions were probably not at all moved from their respective positions.

This early pamphlet is a notable one and presaged what Foote was to do in the future. At all events, in 1876 he brought out *Secular Work and Organisation*. He was then the editor of *The Secularist*—a journal merged later in the *Secular Review* which Foote edited with Holyoake. The connection did not last long, but Foote, as a Liberal, wanted to have his say on politics, so he started *The Liberal*, writing and lecturing all the time.

All this active apprenticeship made him just the man needed to edit a journal like *The Freethinker*, though it was only after some years of experience that it became the Freethought paper to be reckoned with. Foote soon found that there was a pretty hefty demand for some of its best articles which he re-issued in pamphlet form, and they preserved some of his best work—work which might otherwise have been completely lost. His *Bible Romances*, published in book form, never lost its popularity, and there

was a constant demand for new editions. I do not think I am being unfair to the many Freethought writers who have carried the flag high since it appeared, when I say that very few of them, if any at all, could have written such a work. It is packed with scholarly research, enlivened with wit, and splendidly written. Some of the "romances" have been translated into other languages, but I doubt if Foote ever gained a penny piece from them.

With J. M. Wheeler, he wrote what became his "best seller", *The Bible Handbook*. It is packed with quotations from the Bible. What he and Wheeler did, and it was extremely valuable work, was to add voluminous notes to the quotations not only to expose their absurdities, but to strike a blow at Bible "inspiration". And in their *Crimes of Christianity*, they gave historical proof of forgery, torture, imprisonment, etc., of which the average Christian of their day (as in our own) knew nothing. No "evangelist" ever mentions such crimes that were committed by fervent Christians in the name of "gentle Jesus, meek and mild".

Foote did not forget his predecessors. He dealt with them in his *Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought*, published in 1876. In his *Rome or Atheism* (1892), he dealt with the two Newmans—Francis William the Theist, as well as John Henry the famous Cardinal, and disclosed a fact which the two Newmans usually tried to hide. It was that there was a *third* brother, Charles Robert, who was actually an Atheist, and had published *Essays in Rationalism*, in 1891. To this day, very little is known of him except that he was pushed into the background as much as possible. And Foote gave the show away much to the annoyance not only of the two brothers, but also of their followers. I should like one day to give more details about CR who, in addition to his published work, left a box full of manuscripts. These were *of course* destroyed.

Foote wrote many pamphlets on "morality", and on "ethics". He revelled in writing on the history of Christianity and its "origins". His work was widely read, but few of his pamphlets have survived. They were passed round so much that they soon disintegrated. I managed to collect many of them, and they still read as freshly as when they were first published. His English was always impeccable, not only in his writing but also in his lectures and debates. He was indeed a formidable debater. When Annie Besant became a Socialist, he debated the subject for four nights with her.

G. W. Foote was a remarkable personality although most of his contemporaries are dead—I only hope that he will still be remembered as a great Freethinker, a fine writer and a marvellous speaker and debater.

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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.c. 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, DUGAN, 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

Bromley Discussion and Social Group (14 Great Elms Road, Bromley), Friday, August 26th, 8 p.m.: GLADWELL MZAMO, "The Evil that Men do". September 2nd, GILLIAN HAWTIN, "The Menace of Catholicism Today".

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, WC1), Sunday, September 25th, 3 p.m., Annual Reunion. 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.

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REVIEW

David Tribe

Vatican Politics (At the Second Vatican Council, 1962-5), George Bull, Oxford University Press, 10/6.

WE HAVE HERE an interesting short account of Vatican II prepared by an authority on the Italian Renaissance for the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Appropriately George Bull is also a financial journalist.

An Eumenical Council is rare enough—this is only the twenty-first—to attract world attention, and Vatican publicists made the most of their material. It would also be fair to say that there is real soul-searching in the Church, at least among the laity, lower clergy and progressive cardinals in developed countries. The slogan of "the Church in the modern world" is not a mere advertising jingle.

It is entirely another question whether the Church has, or could, come to terms with the modern world. Of the Declaration on Religious Freedom Mr Bull observes: "Partly to reassure the minority as far as possible, the schema added that the concept of religious liberty left intact the Catholic teaching on the one true religion". Partly indeed. Could an infallible teaching Church be expected to say less? Can Holy Mother become a unit in a harem?

In many reviews of the council's work and in this book the wish is clearly father to the thought. We have been told by people busy, for reasons best known to themselves, hobnobbing in ecclesiastical halls that here is a rebirth of liberalism and goodwill, humility and democracy; in Mr Bull's words, "freeing the Church of an atmosphere clouded with authoritarianism and intellectual fear for one of service and exploration". Strangely, few if any of these neo-optimists seemed to notice the authoritarianism intellectual fear before, and when secularists were indiscreet enough to refer to this then, they were detailed off to psycho-analysts for anti-paranoid therapy.

Some reviewers have made Mr Bull give the Vatican a clean bill of health and chosen not to see the reservations in his commentary. He points out that not only were vital modern questions like contraception, nuclear weapons and conscientious objection not faced up to, but that liberal utterances still have to negotiate an entrenched bureaucracy on their way to implementation. "How far the Council put the Church into a credible posture for dialogue with the world on these issues may be judged in the light of the fate of the declaration on religious liberty and Schema 13 (the basis for the final constitution on the Church in the World Today). In this case the overall results may be considered encouraging but still inconclusive." Or: "Before the Church can expect to carry on a dialogue with outsiders, it must start on a dialogue among its own members of friendship, confidence, and liberty". Or again: "In its upgrading of the position of the Catholic laity in the Church, the message of *De Ecclesia* could conceivably be disregarded."

This book is indispensable reading for those who want handy reference to matters discussed, machinery used and decisions reached at this important congress. Whatever else it may have been it was certainly a masterpiece of organisation. Just as it is wrong to look only at the liberal speeches and ingratiating promises it would be equally wrong to see nothing but the conservative intrigues and episcopal equivocations. But rationalists must take a long as well as a broad view. Liberalism and democracy are delicately if not dangerously poised in the modern world. The Catholic Church is no stranger to "modernisation". *Summa Theologica* was a thirteenth century *tour de force* of persuasion and dialogue written while Aquinas's Dominican colleagues were busy organising the Inquisition. Now, of course, the Holy Office is called the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. At the turn of this century the world was impressed by the pronouncements of Modernism. Then came Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Pavlich and Pius XII. The worker-priests were a most encouraging experiment in 1943, till dropped by John in 1959. A modified scheme was tentatively reintroduced last year for a three-year trial. And so it goes on. The Catholic Church may have changed. Its creeds may now be poetic symbolism and not harsh fact, its attitude one of love and tolerance and not suspicion and coercion. We are entitled to positive evidence. All we have seen so far is an aggressive demand throughout the world for more State money for segregated Catholic schools. Is this a token of good faith in "dialogue"? At the best a changed "relationship between the Church and the outside world . . . is likely to be a long revolution". When Catholic priestesses are elected by their parishioners we can be quite certain the Church has changed. Even then the priestesses may be St Teresas.

NEWS AND NOTES

(Continued from page 268)

to do the killing? Would Mr Duncan Sandys do the job he wants done himself? Let the families of the victims be given all the comfort they can and let our own understanding of what their husbands and fathers have to face day by day be increased. We read also of the cancer-hazard faced by those who work with asbestos. This too may mean death. A sense of proportion need not diminish our very real sense of shock and distress, but legal violence and murder in revenge for illegal violence and murder, has never done anyone any good. It is a sign of barbaric and primitive man.

Religion and the BBC

THE Christian Broadcasting Department certainly seems to have taken over *The Archers* and is rarely far from *The Dales*. I am still trying to work out, however, what Monica Furlong meant when she called *The Newcomers* "mischievous". Mind you, Lance, the young boy, did reply to his grandmother who said "I pray that . . ." (something or other), "we do that at school. We are forced to . . ." and presumably that script had not been through the Christian department for vetting. It may not be a programme for highbrows, but at least subjects such as the monarchy, nuclear weapons, management and employees and so on, are dealt with without too much gentility.

Why not?

THERE HAS BEEN as yet no denial from the Vatican of the rumour that Spring 1967 will see mini-skirts for priests . . .

LETTERS

Anyone going up to THE Oxford University Humanist Group would be glad to hear in advance from any reader who will be coming to Oxford in October, and who would like to take an active part in the work of the Group. Please write to me at 63 Kingston Road, Oxford.
HOWARD RYE, *Secretary*

Rhodesia: Mr Huxley replies

I APPEAR to have roused a swarm of hornets which are intent on stinging me. Permit me to swat them. Mr Macfarlane gives his own definition of Humanism and pontificates on the correct attitude of mind for Humanists. (This is the Humanist faith, which except a man unfeignedly believe he will incur the wrath of Mr Macfarlane.) To Lilian Middleton I would point out that your journal was founded to debunk supernatural religion. That task is not finished. Religion is not reviled; it is criticised. Religion is the curse of mankind. If everything that interests readers be discussed, the journal will soon lose its character. This would delight our foes, the churches.

I am not aware that I ever said that Rhodesia must not be discussed, though the FREETHINKER is not the right place for it. Among the negroes there may be some good people, but there is no room for them in these overcrowded Islands. I would also deplore unrestricted immigration from Europe, although they be white. And the Romanist Church which insists on large families is a menace.

To Adele Paul I would point out that if freedom of action were granted to everyone we could not sleep peacefully in our beds. I like to consider all opinions, but I only adopt them if I approve them.

The British Empire is now dead. Its ghost, the Commonwealth, should be laid. One African negro proposes to expel Britain from the British Commonwealth. I hope he succeeds. The money which Britain is pouring into the coffers of these African States (which probably enriches the statesmen, not the State) could be better used at home.

If Mr Simons wishes to terminate his support for your journal because it prints matter which he dislikes, let him. Such a person is not a Freethinker.

Mr Blood's arguments (July 22nd) are illogical. It is fashionable now with such types to decry the work of our grandparents; yet although they made some mistakes, they were a force for good. The white colonists were uninvited to Rhodesia. Is it imagined that a few millennia earlier the negroes were invited by the pygmies whom they displaced? The negroes considered their employment lucrative, and they are the best judges. It raised their standard of living considerably.

I note that white Rhodesians are not akin to your correspondent. Ergo, he and I are not akin either. Since Mr Blood finds negroes so charming, he should go to Africa to live among them. He would not be missed.

I am quite willing to hail negroes as men and brothers, but even brothers would be *de trop* in my lady's chamber.

There is nothing childish in ceasing to subscribe to a journal which fundamentally changes its character. The FREETHINKER was founded before I was born to combat supernaturalism, the greatest curse of the Western world. If it confines itself to this task it can be assured of my sub.

W. E. HUXLEY

[Apart from letters on this subject already published, I have received two letters supporting Mr Huxley's views (he is not "Sir Julian" as someone thought!) All these are, I hope I need not add, totally at variance with the FREETHINKER'S attitude towards racialism. The following are extracts from letters opposing Mr Huxley.—Ed.]

"I WOULD like to reinforce Mr Macfarlane's remarks by showing that there is an even greater hypocrisy shown by Mr Huxley, in the nonsense and humbug of the pretence that political issues are not remotely concerned with freethought. I feel that the trends represented by Mr Huxley are very dangerous in a Movement like ours. Even those people who are not avowed fascists, if they hold such reactionary views could bring discredit to our Movement. It is quite likely that fascists and reactionaries, of one shade or another, will try to use freethought as a vehicle for the expression of their views, as at other times they have, for the same purpose, allied themselves to the religionists.

DONALD VICTOR CHAPLIN

MR HUXLEY is almost correct when he states that the "British Empire is dead"—"is dying" would be more correct, but this does not in any way free Britain of her obligations to the Commonwealth countries, which played no small part in contributing with blood and sacrifice to the British economy in the rough and turbulent times (mid 15th-19th centuries) in return for which they profited nothing . . . There is only one race, the human race, and for any one member of a section of this all-embracing genus to presume that it is superior to any other section would be to identify himself with intolerance and ignorance. To further exhibit his insularity and offensiveness, Mr Huxley becomes so petty that he threatens the FREETHINKER with the withdrawal of his subscription if it continues "its virulent enmity to my relatives in Rhodesia". Huxley must remember that he is not alone; other people want to air *their* views and are entitled to the privilege . . .

C. S. NILES

[Let no one imagine that threats about stopping their subscriptions have any effect on any of us or on the policy of this paper.—Ed.]

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