

FREE THINKER

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THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING TESS

'Miss Brigid Brophy is off on a wild goose chase in her Fabian pamphlet *Religious Education in State Schools*. "It is an immoral hypocrisy", she writes, "to compel worship to take place in the schools". The plain fact is that compulsion is there because the majority of people in this country want it . . .

So far we have relied in this country on Christian inspiration for our moral sense. The Christian religion, one can say, carries our national morality on its back. No one can be greatly proud of our moral showing at this time. But it should be immediately apparent that what morals we have are owed largely to Christianity . . .

Morality is needed by every settled community, and in Russia the state had to fill the breach. Not many in Britain would wish to see the state take over in this field. One suspects that Miss Brophy would not wish it either. But if it is not to be the state, we have to rely on the churches and the schools as we have done up to now. No obvious third man is pushing to the fore . . .

It is a dry time and Christians have reason to address themselves to the Holy Spirit . . . (Leader in *Times Educational Supplement*, London, April 7, 1967.)

IT IS A PITY that limitations of space and copyright prevent the reprinting of this *Times Educational Supplement* leader in its entirety. If it did not appear in such a long-established and deeply respected paper one could be forgiven for believing the anonymous writings above to be the ramblings of an ill-read and unobservant ignoramus. However, the fact is that the extracts are from a leader in the *Times Educational Supplement* and thus must be accepted as the perceptive comments of an authoritative and highly intelligent individual. Certainly I, weak being that I am, was very nearly fooled into thinking, quite wrongly of course, that the writer was ill-informed. Let us have a closer look at one or two of the points which very nearly deluded me into forming what would have been an unfortunate misconception. For the sake of convenience, I shall refer to this *Times Educational Supplement* Sophist as 'Tess'.

1. 'So far we have relied on Christian inspiration for our moral sense.'

This is largely true and partly explains why moral sense has developed so slowly. But have we relied on Christian

inspiration to reform the abortion laws or the homosexual laws or the hanging laws? Have we relied on Christian inspiration to build the Welfare State? Have we relied on it to rid the nation of workhouses and slums, of poverty and disease? Show me, sweet Tess, how Christian inspiration has helped in all this and I shall be indebted to you. I shall then refer you, by quoting chapter and verse if you wish, to the activities of various Christian inspired organisations such as the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, societies which still exist today and continue to have a large income, and I shall show you how these societies have immorally encouraged the idle rich to keep the working poor in poverty. Without doubt Christian inspiration has proved an interesting commodity.

2. 'The Christian religion, one can say, carries our national morality on its back.'

Oh Tess. What beautiful, beautiful words. They almost melt my heart. Do tell me. What do they mean?

3. 'No one can be greatly proud of our moral showing at this time.'

Well Tess, what is our moral showing at this time? You show me our moral showing at this time and I will show you it better now than it was 60—160 years ago when Christianity permeated the land to a nauseating degree.

4. 'But it should be immediately apparent that what morals we have are owed largely to Christianity.'

Tell me Tess, what morals do we have and how are they owed largely to Christianity? It may be that your spectacles were made by the divine optician himself. This would explain why it is that what I am incapable of seeing is immediately apparent to you.

5. (With reference to morality) 'We have to rely on the churches and the schools as we have done up to now. No obvious third man is pushing to the fore.'

We don't need a third man, Tess, unless it be the Holy Spirit to which, you say, Christians should address themselves at this dry time. Nor do we need the churches, and as for relying on them, that would be sheer stupidity. The churches have proved in many ways obstacles to moral development. As for the schools, morality can be taught there but it can be taught effectively only when immoral hypocrisy has been expelled. However, it seems that you want to put immoral hypocrisy at the top of the prize list along with compulsion and ignorance. That's why we have problems.

I must confess that the *Times Educational Supplement* leader confused me. Was I really reading an original leader in one of our foremost educational journals? Or was I reading a reprint of a religious tract?

I'm still not sure.

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Speaking Personally

WHEN I was about 14, ie, 56 years ago, I spent a holiday with a friend, Dai Davies, in a Welsh village. His parents owned a small farm and worked very hard, rising long before daylight and often toiling long after dark.

They were very kind people, but suffered from religious mania. We had to attend prayer meetings morning and evening in the living room, in the company of the general servant, the cowman and the odd-job labourer.

However I found conditions tolerable until the Sunday when we walked half a mile to the chapel three times for long services. The afternoon seance consisted of a prayer meeting. I had no previous experience of such exhibitionism and it frightened me. I beheld the extraordinary spectacle of adults beating their breasts, howling that they were sinful and yelling about their degradation.

When a labourer called Evan Cwm rose to rant, Dai whispered to me: "Now for some fun. When he gets excited he chucks a fit". So I peeped through my fingers. Evan began to gesticulate and shout like one possessed. Indeed he behaved exactly like a person tormented by devils. I had never before witnessed such a performance and it fascinated me. Suddenly Evan foamed at the mouth and fell to the floor. At once two stalwart stewards rushed forward and carried him out. Nobody else took much notice. They were too busy singing a hymn about the wonderful goodness of God.

Worshippers rose to pray aloud as the spirit moved them. Some were expert at it, others abysmally bad. Nearly all the speeches were in Welsh which I did not understand very well, but there was no mistaking the fanatical fervour. One fanatical moaner accused himself of evil thoughts when he clapped eyes on a certain pretty woman with superb pectoral adornments and shapely shanks. He mentioned her name. No doubt she felt very flattered.

Some of the experts indulged in the hwy!, a curious sing-song tirade, apparently devoid of sense. During these fantastic farces I wanted to laugh. They seemed to me completely daft and grotesque.

A hermit with a wild eye, a long red beard and gnarled hands was a very eloquent performer. He lived in a cave and did casual labour on farms. His speciality was describing Christ's agony and bloody sweat on the cross. Possessed of much histrionic ability he yelled, raved, ranted and moaned. He really frightened me. I even stopped playing with my handkerchief which I had turned into a quadruped, complete with ears.

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AN ALARMING EXPERIENCE

While he was at the climax of his rodomontade a storm came on, with thunder and lightning. Branches of trees brushed against the chapel windows. I feared the end of the world was at hand.

When the hermit collapsed exhausted, a short, rubicund market gardener rose to declaim. He pretended to be Daniel in the lions' den. At intervals he growled and snarled, defied the wild beasts and was saved by the infinite mercy of the living God.

Another wiseacre pretended to be Sau! (later Paul) on the Damascus Road. God asked him in a terrible voice: "Why persecutest thou Me?" A gaunt pig-keeper pretended to be Noah supervising the animals as they entered the ark. He described each one at great length. During some of the turns I squirmed in mortal agony, especially when Satan tempted Jesus and promised Him all the kingdoms of the earth if He would only worship Him.

In the evening the service lasted for one and a half hours. The sermon was on the text about what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

I had a nightmare after retiring to bed. My room was over the cowshed and no doubt the animals disturbed me. I lay awake, panic-stricken, thinking the devil was after me. Every squeak and rattle terrified me. I thought I had been so wicked that the devil had decided to send his cohorts for me.

Next day I was asked if I would like to take part in a Seiat (Session) to be held that evening. At such meetings one discussed one's personal religious experiences, but I did had enough. I pleaded a sharp attack of toothache. Dai went and told me afterwards they had behaved like lunatics.

I had intended staying there for the whole of the summer holiday, but decided I could stand no more. I could not tell my parents why I wanted to quit, for they too were very religious so I pretended I felt ill, but the evening before my departure they held a special prayer meeting for my benefit.

The star performer this time was a half-wit who sold Old Moore's Almanacks outside Swansea Market. He preached from the text that we can be sure our sins will find us out. He described the secret vices of successful men and how God will denounce them on Judgment Day. According to Ianto Taibach all the calamities that afflict mankind are sent to punish us for our wickedness.

He terrified me by a very vivid description of leprosy and warned us that this terrible disease can come upon us at any time. It starts as a spot on the palm, which we cover as best we can, but the time arrives when we can conceal it no more and we have to be put away. Thereafter the malady inexorably gnaws at us until we die in dreadful agony.

I did not realise that leprosy is very rare in this country. For years I was scared I might contract it. I even wrote to the medical column of a newspaper, thinking I had the symptoms. Indeed I promised God to believe in Him and His Son if only He would grant me immunity.

I suppose they meant well, but it was very wrong of those religious maniacs to frighten children with their devils and hell-fire.

A CURIOUS INCIDENT

A CURIOUS INCIDENT was reported in a Scottish local paper, *The Helensburgh Advertiser*, for February 24th, 1967. Apparently, the Education Committee of the County had met to appoint a headmaster to a local authority school, the new Douglas Academy at Bearsden. Candidates were being interviewed when the representative of the Church of Scotland on the committee, the Rev. John H. Dutch, persisted in asking whether or not they were members of the Church of Scotland. Councillor Wilson Stewart apparently protested but Mr Dutch was supported by the chairman, Councillor Matthew Bisset. In later interviews with the press, Mr Dutch insisted that it was his business to represent the church. He had used the test of church membership to exclude any atheist from appointment. The chairman said that he would have prevented any question with regard to political belief but that religious belief is a different matter.

The whole incident is more than disquietening. Let it be admitted at once that both law and tradition are different in Scotland with regard to the question of religious education and that the tangled skein of the history of Scots Protestantism has played into the hands of those who would retain the place of religious instruction in the state schools. The fact still remains that Mr Dutch was apparently a co-opted member of the committee and that he used his position for sectarian and denominational rather than for democratic and representative ends. The chairman would be an elected member of the local authority and it is his duty to act in a representative manner. He is not a mere delegate of the local Christians and he should see that the local atheists, who are also ratepayers, do not have their democratic rights trampled down by the Rev. J. H. Dutch and his kind.

The whole matter ought to be referred to the Secretary of State for Scotland. If it really represents habits north of the Border, it bodes ill for free or liberal thought in Scotland itself. It is the more curious in that advanced thought has been commonly associated with the City of Glasgow and that it is possible to recall a time when "the wild men from the Clyde" represented the left-wing of British Socialism. A Glasgow MP and free churchman, the late Rev. James Barr, was once among the leaders of the movement for secular education. But the strength of the old "free Kirk" was sapped by the reunion of 1929 and its former radicalism disappeared. Radical Christianity of the Unitarian type has never been strong in Scotland and its present state suggests that even the weariest protest winds somewhere safe into the sand! Humanism and Secularism are unrepresented outside the big cities. Thus, despite a tendency for Scotland to be radical in politics, it is religionists of the type of the Rev. John H. Dutch who end by having it all their own way.

Again, Mr Bisset's reference to politics is curious. It possibly means that, although reactionaries north of the Border probably vote Tory just as much as their counterparts of southern climes, the traditions of Liberalism in the countryside and of Socialism in the cities is sufficient to compel a certain impartiality in these matters when appointments to a local authority come to be made. But it also serves as a warning that a careful indifference to politics together with a safeguarding of religion opens the door to the most reactionary and socially undesirable forms of religious belief. The infiltration of the pernicious propaganda of MRA into schools affords an excellent

F. H. Amphlett Micklewright

example of the danger. It would also be of some interest to know how many Roman Catholic teachers are employed in Scotland by schools under the control of the State and not possessing Roman Catholic affiliations. In view of certain happenings in England, the answer might serve as a warning on both sides of the border.

Several points stand forth. The one is the sheer undesirability of the present system by which members outside the Council are incorporated on to education committees with the authority of the Statute. It is a survival from the old days of School Boards and will mean that persons can get into positions of authority who have never faced the electors and who do not represent anybody but a sectional group. Political parties sometimes use these nominations to retain in public life persons who have failed to win the suffrages of the electors. Religious bodies use their opportunity to push forward people like the Rev. John H. Dutch and to secure the advocating of a highly partisan point of view. There is no differentiation in voting powers or in scope so far as the unelected members of the committee be concerned. For all we know, Mr Dutch may be a person who would win the confidence of the electorate if he stood for council membership. But the fact remains that he has not done so, that he is a co-opted member and that he has used this position to claim to represent the opinion of a group within the community and to force his viewpoint upon the candidates whom he was interviewing at large. The incident calls attention to yet one more desirability in local government reform generally, that of the closing of all local authority committees to everybody save those persons who have faced the electorate.

The other point is that such incidents are bound to arise so long as religious instruction continues in the schools. Space and time are alike lacking to summarise over again here the well-known case for secular education. But it is permissible to point out that those who seek a compromise in these matters and who imagine that there can be some sort of working together of Christians and humanists towards a mitigated form of religious instruction in the schools should recall that, at the local level, it will probably be the hardcore variety of Christian of the type of the Rev. John H. Dutch whom they will be forced to face. There is a clash of opposites. Mr Dutch and his friends would seem to assert that "the whole tone of any school" rests upon the religious affiliations of the staff. Humanists and secularists will assert that morality is a sociological factor arising from the social and economic background of the existent community. Compromise between the implications arising from the two contrasted points of view would seem to be impossible.

There is also a third point to be weighed and considered. It is that questions of this kind tend to prevent many able candidates from coming forward or that they rule out men of better abilities in favour of inferior candidates or of candidates who do not mind a little hypocrisy on the side. Scotland is a land of religious disputation and this result has happened again and again in that country before now. A good example was provided about a century ago when appointment to the chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh was still in the hands of the Town Council. One of the most eminent Hegelians in Europe, Dr

(Continued at foot of page 132)

NEWS AND NOTES

THE battle raging over David Steel's Abortion Bill nears its climax. MPs are receiving hundreds of stereotyped letters and cards mainly from Roman Catholic and Moral Re-Armament sources, and meetings are being addressed by church dignitaries in many places.

The Abortion Law Reform Association has just issued a leaflet containing devastating information based on National Opinion Polls surveys. Each year 40,000 women have an abortion, and at least 31,000 of these are criminal abortions, mostly performed on married women who already have children. In 1964, twenty-four women—several of them mothers of large families—died after criminal abortions, and four died after legal abortions. During the same year 177 died from childbirth in England and Wales.

Two Roman Catholic MPs are trying to get a Royal Commission set up, but this is clearly a delaying tactic. The Birkett Committee carried out a full inquiry just before the war and its Report was shelved. In recent times there has been a massive swing in public opinion on this issue, and less than a year ago when National Opinion Polls asked: "Should it be made easier to obtain a legal abortion?", the answers were Yes, 75%; No, 20%; Don't know, 3%; No answer, 2%. Many of those who answered "yes" were Roman Catholics, and this is not surprising as Roman Catholic women are no less likely to have had an abortion than women of other religious convictions.

Everybody who wishes to see Britain's antiquated abortion laws reformed should write at once to their MPs at the House of Commons, London, SW1, urgently requesting them to vote in favour of David Steel's bill on June 2nd. Copies of the leaflet referred to, and information about the Abortion Law Reform Association may be had from Mrs D. Cossey, 19 Kenneth Court, 173 Kennington Road, London, SE11.

Success Story

ALTHOUGH she had taught for only two terms at the village school in Ivegill, Cumberland, Miss Annie Armstrong won the affection and admiration of pupils and parents. When she left recently a presentation was made. Mr Todhunter, the postmaster, described Miss Armstrong as "the best teacher we ever had in the village", and

another resident said: "The children are heartbroken, they thought the world of Miss Armstrong, and most would have gone to school seven days a week for her".

Miss Armstrong was obviously a gem, but was asked to resign by the school managers who decided that she could not teach the diocesan syllabus to the requirement of a Church of England aided school. The wicked girl is a Methodist!

A petition was organised and protest meetings held. Miss Armstrong (whose class was of infants up to the age of eight) said she had not refused to teach the syllabus. But this did not prevent her from getting the order of the boot. The chairman of the school managers has wisely refused to comment.

Good Cause

THE Free Art Legal Fund—full details of which are to be announced shortly—will benefit from a concert at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on Sunday, April 30th. Martin Esslin will compère a programme of songs, sketches, dialogues and readings from the works of Samuel Beckett and Bertolt Brecht. The artistes will include Patrick Magee, Nichol Williamson and Betty Jonic.

Tickets are available from the theatre box-office (telephone, Sloane 1745) price £3 3s, £2 2s, £1 1s and 10/6d

Freedom-in-art

AT the Academy of Visual Arts, London, on April 14th, Jean Straker eloquently addressed a club meeting on the relationship of Christian to classical mythology and the development of puritanism, and demonstrated the artistic problems of female nude photography.

Forum

THE National Secular Society is organising a Public Forum on censorship, at Caxton Hall, London, on Friday, June 23rd. The speakers will include John Calder, Peter Fryer and David Tribe.

E.A.

A CURIOUS INCIDENT

(Continued from page 131)

Hutchinson Stirling, was rejected and a far inferior philosopher, the Rev. Professor Calderwood, was appointed. The reason was that Dr Calderwood, who at that date had published nothing, was a minister of the popular Free Kirk whereas Dr Hutchinson Stirling could not answer in a satisfactory manner the question, "Are you a joined member of any religious body?" As a result, the university suffered in the academic loss which it had incurred. It would be difficult to say how often such situations have been repeated as a result of the sort of conduct which was revealed in the Bearsden appointment.

I do not accuse Mr Dutch or Mr Bisset of any administrative shortcoming, although I can fully understand the protest of Mr Wilson Stewart. It may well be that the law of Scotland has not been infringed in any way. Nonetheless, I insist that the whole story shows a most undesirable state of affairs as prevailing in Scottish educational appointments and we have every right to demand that a Labour Secretary of State for Scotland, who should be sundered from the old Tory belief in the alliance of Church and State, should take such steps as to bring the law into a state where a recurrence of the incidents surrounding the Bearsden appointment could not happen again.

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NEW THINKING ON WAR AND PEACE: IV

A. C. Thompson

Education and War

This is the last of a series of four articles which analyse the causes and prevention of war according to the new Social-Survival theory of ethics which maintains the law that all moral behaviour is directed towards the survival of the agent's society.

OF ALL PROPOSALS for abolishing war—armament, stockpiling, disarmament, arbitration, brinkmanship, world government, prayer, imitation of Jesus, etc.—perhaps the best hope is education. Its drawback is that it is a slow process. It does not promise peace in our time; at most, it offers a peaceful world for our children. The previous article explained that hostility is a result of distrust, fear and hatred of other societies often ingrained by educational influences since earliest childhood, and education of a new type can liberate the attitudes of people and thus affect the causes, rather than the concomitants, of war.

Beginning with the most primitive times, throughout all the ages of human existence, teaching has been based on indoctrination, in the tribal lore, in conformity to established thought patterns considered necessary for social unity. Children all over the world and in all ages have been compelled to accept and repeat doctrines which cannot all be true since they contradict one another in different geographical locations and historical periods. Education has been universally regarded as a process by which children or other persons "learn", which has meant to commit to memory, uncritically, a quantity of information, and to remember it as long as possible, or to understand information or principles which are accepted uncritically. The word "teach" has meant to present the information and principles which are to be memorised or understood uncritically, and a good teacher is one who so elucidates the information and principles as to facilitate their comprehension and memorisation, or who is able to exact from students their maximum effort in comprehending and memorising uncritically. The alternative to this sort of education is one completely free of dogmatism.

Our modern age should be mature enough to realise that it is wrong to indoctrinate the trusting minds of children, whose faith derives from their dependence. The whole past history of the world shows that human progress has been made where there has existed the right to think, and that where thought has been controlled, proscribed or suppressed, there has been little or no progress. Those parts of the world where beliefs have been enforced by unyielding taboos have preserved from generation to generation the same customs and traditions almost without change from the time of prehistory. By contrast, the "Golden Age" of ancient Greece which gave to the world such a sudden flood of new ideas, occurred when, with Sophist influence, nobody cared very much what anyone else believed.

If we seek a fundamental difference between the modern scientific method of thought, which has been so prolific in new knowledge, and an unscientific one, we may conclude that this difference lies not so much in the curiosity or the diligence or other personal characteristics that the true man of science is usually portrayed as having, as it does in the freedom of thought which is accorded him.

For, during the Middle Ages, there were certainly curiosity and diligence and other scientific traits of character among scholars; the one thing they conspicuously lacked was freedom from dogmatism. The one essential requirement of scientific thought is that the mind of the thinker, and the minds of those he addresses, shall be free.

We Secularists desire our children, when they grow up, ever to refuse to submit their minds to the tyranny of indoctrination. We want our descendants, in all the generations that are to come, ever to cherish the right to think as one of the inviolable rights of man. We will teach them from their earliest schooldays to think for themselves and to expect to be accorded always the right to think for themselves. If we could gain this right in the education of all children, we could make the minds of men free for all time to come; for once this freedom were established, there could hardly be a return to teaching by indoctrination. The principle must be kept in mind that intellectual freedom must mean freedom to learn, rather than freedom to teach.

When Hitler came to power, the fact that he could decide what was to be taught in all the schools of Germany was a most important factor in creating and consolidating the Nazi régime. Teaching in the German schools became specific indoctrination for war; but it was only a more extreme form of the nationalistic "patriotic" teaching which prevails in every country. Dogmatism gets children accustomed to dogmatism; they fit their minds into the thought patterns that the most influential group in society has ordained for them and do not dare to think for themselves or to say anything that is different. People can as easily become accustomed to intellectual freedom.

Actual methods of teaching without dogmatism are now available for schools. There is, for example, a new scheme for teaching the methods of science, from primary school upwards, by simply presenting to children the history of and evidence for scientific discoveries, letting them reach their own conclusions, and setting real research problems for whose solution, working usually in small groups, they pursue independent laboratory or field researches according to their own plans, reaching and defending their own conclusions. Most intelligent people today, educators and laymen, realise that dogmatism is opposed to the true spirit and method of science, and has no place in science instruction. Educational literature today is full of pleas for the development of critical thinking, independent judgment and intellectual liberty. The reason why freedom of thought is not a universal policy in schools is the active opposition of dogmatists who want children to believe what they do, and the passive inertia of those who fear any change in belief as a vague threat to the survival of society. True, in the past methods were not available. Because children have not the knowledge that adults have, the task of education was seen as that of transferring knowledge from the minds of adults into the empty minds of children. This knowledge had to be correct or the children would learn error. Hence this knowledge had to be that judged to be right. Since it was thus approved as orthodox, there was no further question about it and it was what the child must learn. The teacher taught it, the child learned it, memorised it, and when required repeated it to assure the teacher that the effort of teaching had succeeded. But today there are other ways.

It can no longer even be objected that complete freedom from dogmatism in science education is not possible, for any knowledge, any teaching, any argument must rest upon some fundamental assumptions or premises which cannot be proved and which must merely be accepted. If children are taught, one may ask, instead of the conclusion, the methods used to find the conclusion, cannot this latter teaching be as dogmatic as the former? The answer is that in the scientific-method education referred to above, no philosophical principle, however fundamental, would be exempt from examination and criticism. Similarly, there is no dogmatism about the principles of the scientific method. The children must satisfy themselves, in their own minds, about effective and reliable methods of finding truth.

Proposals are heard for education for international understanding. But this is perilous. It is not without reason that education authorities and civic organisations strenuously oppose it. Why is nationalism taught in schools, why have children of every land been taught pride in their nation's achievements, allegiance to its government, support for its policies? Is it because every nation plots a career of conquest? No; rather it is because it desires to defend itself and to survive. Children have been taught a fighting loyalty to their own countries so that they will resist an aggressive enemy that might enslave them. It has happened all through history. Will it never happen again? What a tragedy it would be if the children of some peaceful and benevolent country were so taught to so love and sympathise with all mankind that they lost that pride in their own country which would rouse them to repel an invader, and if they thus became the victims of a ruthless conqueror seeking to extend his power! Such international sentiment conceivably might even cause a nation to be swallowed up by another without any invasion, without any struggle, without resistance. Hence, education for international understanding may be not quite suited to a world in which exist Alexanders, Caesars, Napoleons and Hitlers.

Intellectual liberty does not have this fault. A child may be taught impartially all the theories of ethics that the world has known, and his own mind may freely see the logical imperative that his moral duty is to contribute to his society's survival. Intellectual freedom permits children not only sympathy for people of other lands, but also reasonable esteem for their own territory, institutions, liberties and society. Education for permanent peace, further, must go deeper than knowledge of such superficialities as another country's language, culture and traditions. It must reach down to the basic causes of separation and competition of societies.

World union with world government may not be the correct answer. Correspondence of ideology is no guarantee of peace. China and Russia are both Communist countries with the same basic ideology. But both are struggling for ascendancy. If Russia sought to dominate the Communist world, China must reject the USSR, for the USSR dogmatizes, following a practice taken over uncritically from the Orthodox Church. If a Russian official can lay down the right doctrine the Chinese must be taught, he can lay down anything—that Mao Tse-tung should be thrown out, for example. Hence Mao excludes the Russian dogmatist and instead imposes his own writings. China, or any country, must regard an attempt by Russia or any country to dominate her as a threat to her own liberty and hence to her own survival. And Mao

evidently expects indoctrination to preserve his despotism against his rivals. The truth of an ideological conflict is not what matters; what matters is the threat that is conceived to the survival of one's society. While it is not the truth of the issue that matters, it is nevertheless the existence of ideological difference that divides and frightens societies. Indoctrination arouses uniformity of fear, hatred and hostility.

Peaceful co-existence between peoples of divergent political faiths is possible if the people on both sides enjoy freedom of belief. If a people experienced from early childhood an education which accorded to everyone the right to think, such people would not be likely to harbour antipathy to others because of their beliefs. Also, an intellectually free people would not strive militantly to impose their doctrines on others. Especially, a people educated in the methods of science could hardly impose a political or economic system elsewhere by force of arms. No intellectually free people, respecting the intellectual freedom of all other people could visualise the forceful overthrow of another government as a means of converting another people to preferred economic and political doctrines and practices. With universal freethought, peaceful co-existence would be not only possible but sequential.

It is the reciprocal nature of hostility that creates war, or at least blocks the way to international understanding and peace. Agreement on educational freedom throughout the world would be a powerful force for international understanding and unity. If a policy of freedom had begun in education over most of the world at the beginning of the century, we might have had meanwhile a First World War, but it is very doubtful that we would have had the Second. If the people of Germany and Italy had cherished independence of thought as a human right which is not to be surrendered to a dictator, it is doubtful that there could have been a Hitler and a Mussolini, or at least, that they could have wielded the absolute control over human thought that they did. The people of Germany, in particular, might not have accepted the ideas that successful wars strengthen and glorify a nation, that it was necessary for a military Germany to erase the defeat of World War I, and that Jews were responsible for all Germany's troubles. It is also doubtful if there would be now an impending Communist-Capitalist war, if people would permit one another to have the right to think for themselves.

The first article of this series proposed an international constitution based on valid ethics. Freethought would be a provision of this constitution; other provisions space does not permit dealing with here. I am not able to promote the ideas of these papers myself alone; freethinkers throughout the world could do it. I anticipate the same intolerance to these articles, if they are not totally ignored, that society usually bestows as reward to new ideas. The news now carries a story of a young cancer specialist going to America to earn £10,000 a year for research which, of course, may or may not be successful. People have learned to be tolerant of, even to seek and pay for, new ideas in science. They are not yet tolerant of new ethical ideas. My own studies are not on cancer but on the rescue of morals and the elimination of war. I know that, far from £10,000 a year, the road that lies ahead of me may be one of rejection, persecution and calumny. I may become a most vilified person. But I shall endure it for the hope of benefit for my fellow men.

(Concluded)

LETTERS

Family Allowances

YOUR CONTRIBUTOR, Cynthia Blezard, must be deluded if she believes that Child Allowances for Income Tax purposes are an inducement to have children.

Many married women now work to eke out their husbands income or to provide extras, especially in the early days of marriage, earning between £8 to £18 a week, say, in the North of England. It is poor consolation to lose this and receive in exchange an allowance of £115 a year at the standard rate of 8s 3d in the £—at the most. This works out at about 18s per week. If the wife later returns to work a similar situation would occur on each succeeding pregnancy.

In the case of couples with several children already, an addition to the family may bring no relief because the husband's income is already completely offset by allowances. This, however, is the bad case, from your contributor's point of view, where the 'family man' should be discouraged by the withdrawal of allowances which are of no use to him anyway.

K. UNSWORTH.

From MRA Press office

THANK YOU very much for enclosing a copy of your weekly paper, the FREETHINKER.

I was somewhat surprised to read your statement saying that MRA gets its financial backing from the big advertisers on ITV. This is simply untrue. Moral Re-Armament and the building of the new Westminster Theatre Arts Centre is overwhelmingly sustained by thousands of ordinary citizens throughout Britain, many of whom have given at considerable sacrifice.

I enclose a full page advertisement published in the *Daily Express* which presents the financial accounts of Moral Re-Armament.

Mrs Whitehouse, I might add, conducts her campaign entirely on her own initiative.

Moral Re-Armament wants to see on our television screen and theatre stages programmes and plays which certainly expose the reality of life, but which also point people to an effective solution.

"Happy Deathday" by Peter Howard is an example of the type of play that I would like to see presented on our television screen, whether from the BBC or ITV.

BRIAN LIGHTOWLER, MRA Press Office.

Communism and common interest

IN your edition of March 31st, you include an article on 'Philosophy and War' by A. C. Thompson. His argument is valid, until he suggests that all previous students of war have cited as its cause 'human wickedness'. This is not so. Marx taught, and I believe, that war is caused by the basic failing of the capitalist system—the need for ever-expanding markets to satisfy profit demands. To claim that this can be remedied merely by understanding that it is true is obviously nonsense. We must remove the cause of war.

A fundamental change must occur in world society before this is possible, i.e. there must be a general move towards communism (which seems to me to be the practical application of the Social-Survival theory). It is a great pity that Mr Thompson does not carry his argument to its logical conclusion. Surely he is not afraid to prophesy what must be the natural course of society—away from organised self-interest; towards organised common interest.

PETER BURRIDGE.

Reading FREETHINKER again—after 45 years

APPROXIMATELY forty-five years have passed since I read a copy of FREETHINKER. Having just left school at that time I looked around to find some substance of truth wherein to anchor my mind while I lived from youth to now passed middle age.

During those forty-five years I have lived in most countries of the world from the so-called civilised cities to the Bush and Scrub, have fished for sharks off the coast of Queensland and tried to avoid those in Pitt St. Sydney and other cities.

Finding the means with which to live took much of my time so that my search for the substance of truth was haphazard. However not without interest. Having lived among the Witch Doctors in various parts of Africa and seen many things which appeared illogical but nevertheless real, I listened to many of the off-shoots of the Established Church in the Bush and in the cities and came to the conclusion that they had some things in common with the Witch Doctors in the Bush—able to impress their congregations that they and they alone (any particular sect) knew the truth and only through them and what they taught could such truths be

revealed. What must be avoided at all costs was a state of mind of disbelief.

Coming back to live in England (Northampton) I found out that of the 600 off-shoots of the Church was one called "Witnesses of Jehovah". I had met members of this sect in all parts of the world. I am now informed that their numbers have increased twofold in the last few years and I wondered why. I discovered that this sect—having of course the exclusive truth—have now fixed a day or at least the year in which all evil in the world will be wiped away and that all members of Jehovah's Witnesses alive then will live for ever and for ever. This sort of carrot must be the most appealing and accounts for the increase of their numbers especially when the date is now given as 1975. I did not think it possible forty-five years ago that this day and age would see so-called intelligent people prepared to believe such tales.

You may ask what all this has to do with buying a copy of FREETHINKER. Well! Nothing and everything. Reading through the articles I am impressed that there are still people who try and think logically. The article by Cynthia Blezard should be given greater publicity. One thing is obvious, and living in many overcrowded countries makes this more apparent, that the "bursting population" is the real problem this civilization has to face (and don't let the religionists push it under the carpet).

It is difficult to compare the last issue I read with the current one (forty-five years is a long time). However I look forward to reading subsequent issues.

A. S. WARBURTON.

How long?

PUBLIC SCHOOLS have changed considerably since Leach wrote in 1899. Many would think that even George Orwell and Professor R. H. Tawney read strangely out of date now. Once more the NSS seems to be dissipating its energies, this time treating an expert commission to a strangely eclectic instruction in the history of education in this country. One would have thought that 'submissions' should confine themselves to changes requested and reforms desired. Even so, I cannot see that abolition of the public schools is a part of the NSS programme, or is necessary for the achievement of its objects. Personally, I am one of those who are inclined to support them. "The glorious Fourth of June" is a rather one-sided approach, and plenty of their products come from agnostic homes, and remain that way. I am asking, as a rank and file member of the NSS how long I am going to be press-ganged into supporting views which are *not* on my pink membership card.

(Miss) GILLIAN HAWTIN.

Supporting Free Art

MISS G. HAWTIN writes (April 7th) that the National Secular Society should not concern itself with Free Art because association with anything "risqué" detracts from "genuine grievances". While claiming she is not a prude Miss Hawtin emphasises that she "draws the line at a nude", displaying a total (and very sad) misconception of the function of the nude in the art of photography by her immature description of it as "strip-tease" photography! If Miss Hawtin does not consider that censorship of the arts constitutes a genuine grievance I suggest she read again the Principles and Objects set out in her NSS membership card, which clearly state that "Secularism affirms that progress is only possible on the basis of equal freedom of speech and publication". As Secularists, therefore, it is our duty to support the fight for freedom of speech and publication for *everybody* at every opportunity, regardless of whether their ideas coincide with our own. It is to be hoped that the NSS will always continue to support such worthy bodies as the Free Art group.

It is good to see the FREETHINKER welcoming Jean Straker to the ranks of its contributors with his excellent article on censorship. All Secularists worthy of the name should be anxiously looking forward to his success in petitioning the European Commission of Human Rights, for his battle is not merely a personal one but one that is being fought for the ultimate good of us all.

MICHAEL GRAY.

FREETHINKER FIGHTING FUND

THE FREETHINKER is the only weekly Secularist-Humanist paper in the country. It is still only 6d. How much do YOU care how many people it reaches? To advertise we need money, and our expenses are ever-increasing. Whose copy are you reading now? Have you got a subscription? Couldn't you contribute something to the Fighting Fund, say 6d or 6s or £6 or £60? How much do you really care about Freethought and helping other people to hear about it? Do, please, help if you can.

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Humanist Holidays, Art Holiday, Burton Galleries, Wirral
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INDOOR

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Manchester Humanist Society (Geographical Hall, Parsonage
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KNIGHT.

National Secular Society (Register Office Hall, 64 Lower Ormond
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14th, 10 a.m. and 2.30 p.m.: Annual Conference for members
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The Progressive League. Spring Dance at The White House
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South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red
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