

FREETHINKER

Registered at the
G.P.O. as a Newspaper

FOUNDED 1881 by G. W. FOOTE

Friday,
June 16, 1967

HUMANISM AND THE BHA

A NEW 16-page booklet, published by the BHA, called *Humanism and the British Humanist Association*, should do much to attract new members as well as allay some of the misgivings harboured by those humanists who have suspected that BHA humanism is too nebulous and indistinctly secular. It may be that criticism from without has influenced a bolder approach from within. But whatever the reasons for this new frank statement of BHA humanism, the frankness and the clear-cut commitments are to be welcomed. 'The humanist point of view' is expounded on pages 2 and 3. Atheists will be pleased to note the assertion that 'we find the idea of life after death a monumental piece of wishful thinking. We do not believe in God.' If the BHA stands by this its inherited Ethical Mysticism will be relegated to the shades.

Rationalists will concur that 'we prefer to be always curious, always questioning, and to make up our own minds'. Freethinkers who know that one must be continually open to new ideas, continually adapting to new situations, continually seeking new solutions to continually varying problems, will not dispute that 'we value flexibility of approach, especially where moral attitudes are concerned, for these are constantly changing and demand constant re-examination'. The BHA comments on the domineering demands of certain religious bodies and points out that a group is free to persuade, but not to impose. 'That is why humanists so strongly oppose laws based on the unwarranted assumption that "Britain is a Christian country".' Veteran secularist fighters will surely greet this candid statement of intent from the fledgling.

One of the most encouraging aspects of this booklet is its simplicity of exposition. Nowhere is this simplicity more clearly and agreeably epitomised than in BHA Director H. J. Blackham's contribution, 'Why join an organisation?' Contrary to his past image, Mr Blackham answers his own question in surprisingly simple language 'To get things done. To get things studied. To get people woken

up. To discuss your ideas and hear other people's.' It could have been written by a country peasant. That is why it is encouraging.

Mr Blackham reminds us of the need 'to make sure that there is a national body to counter the activities of un-humanists, and preserve the individuality which you value so highly'. There is of course more than one such national body and it is to be hoped that, if the BHA acts as boldly as it speaks in this booklet, co-operation between such bodies and indeed united action on certain issues will swiftly become a reality.

Mr Blackham touches on the thorny point of money. The current BHA membership subscription is £2 a year. Some former members have objected to paying what has seemed to them so much for so little. The BHA has justified this objection in part since it has seemed so intent on playing nicely with 'the other side' and so anxious not to offend un-humanist religionists by being boldly outspoken that not a few one-time members have wondered whether it would be better to withdraw from the BHA and invest their £2 per annum more profitably for the sake of humanity by increasing their support for other humanist organisations. However, the past is history and it is present and future action which matters now. If the BHA lives up to its new self-created image it deserves to succeed and will merit the support necessary for success.

If it really does intend to shed its former temerity and actively and unequivocally oppose un-humanist activity, then £2 a year is not an excessive amount for a humanist, who can afford it, to pay in its support. £2 a year is not an excessive amount to contribute to any humanist organisation which is working successfully to create a freer and happier society. We need to dip further into our pockets. Mr Blackham points out that it costs less than 10d a week to be a member of the BHA. 'Weigh that 10d against the next victory for the Catholic lobby in Parliament, the next injustice against an agnostic that goes unanswered, the next unsupported humanist in trouble—not to speak of general apathy in the face of the world's problems'.

The British Humanist Association is, on its own admission, a young organisation. Actions speak louder than words. 1967 is Campaign Year for the BHA. Support it. Give it a fair chance. The ultimate sanction is always in the hands of an organisation's supporters. When grossly dissatisfied, they can change the organisation's policies from within or abandon it and, by their absence, demonstrate their disapproval from without.

Humanism and the British Humanist Association is a booklet which, for me, regenerates hope and holds promise for the immediate future. Time will tell if the hope is justified and the promise fulfilled.

INSIDE

A FINE EXAMPLE OF MORAL COURAGE	Harry Lamont Speaking Personally
THE LUXURY HOUSES OF GOD	Kit Mouat
INDIAN ABORTION BILL	G. N. Deodhekar
ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS 1967	Jean Straker
TOWARDS CIVIL MARRIAGE FOR ALL	Elizabeth Collins
NEWS AND NOTES	ANNOUNCEMENTS
THEATRE	FILM

Harry Lamont

A FINE EXAMPLE OF MORAL COURAGE

Speaking Personally

I HAVE a great admiration for the negro, James Meredith, who after nine years in the United States Air Force became a student at Jackson State college and then decided to enroll at the University of Mississippi, a white stronghold.

Of course all sorts of difficulties were placed in his way by the white supremacists. His life was threatened. He went to law and after a series of protracted hearings won his case. But even so, the President of the United States and the Attorney-General had to threaten the Governor with imprisonment and fines unless they ceased their obstructive tactics and obeyed the decision of the Federal Court. Troops had to be put on the compound of *Ole Miss* and Meredith was escorted everywhere by US Marshals.

I have also read *Blame Me On History* by Bloke Modisane, an intelligent South African negro who left the country in disgust, unable to endure *apartheid* any longer. The South African Nationalist Government, backed by 99 per cent of the white electorate, are determined to keep non-Europeans down by all available means, fair or foul. Under the pretext of separate development, African wages are kept at a very low level. I know they are higher than in certain other African territories, but the cost of living is such that most Africans suffer from malnutrition.

In South Africa and the Southern States of North America (the Deep South), one sees a similar determination on the part of the whites to keep the African in a permanent state of inferiority. Every white tough, hoodlum and hobo considers himself infinitely superior to every negro, no matter how intelligent and highly educated.

Thirty-five years ago I was Professor of French at the Transvaal University College (now Pretoria University). I was attacked by a gang of thugs and lay in hospital on the danger list for ten days. The ostensible motive for the attack was a book I had written in which two minor characters briefly criticised predicants and rural Boers. My real crime was a series of newspaper articles in which I urged economic, political and social justice for Africans.

South African whites have a guilty conscience where the non-European is concerned. He is humiliated, insulted and treated with contumely at every turn.

South African whites have their backs to the wall, but dare not turn to read the writing on it.

A lot of people believe that *apartheid* (separate development) will work, but I am convinced it is doomed to failure. The whites have grabbed too much of the land and are unwilling to give any of it up. In my opinion the *Bantustans* are not viable.

The whites want cheap African labour, but economic integration proceeds apace and will make nonsense of *apartheid*.

It is the fashion to sneer at a multi-racial society, but in my view it offers the only hope of salvation for South Africa. Character, not race or colour, should be the criterion of a person's worth.

Colour prejudice appeals to the basest passions of the whites. At election times in South Africa one has only to promise to give another twist to the racial screw to be pretty sure the white rabble will vote for you.

South African jails are full of Africans who have violated one or more of the numerous pass laws. It has been said that a lawyer can stop an African in the street at any hour and prove an offence.

South African farmers have their private jails. Africans arrested for pass and other petty offences are bamboozled into signing on as farm helots for a period.

All over the place one sees evidence of racial discrimination, separate entrances for post offices, railway stations and separate seats in parks.

For 30 years I collected cuttings from South African newspapers showing the disparity before the law of white and black. A white farmer who flogged a native to death was fined £7. A black who rapes a white woman is sentenced to death and executed. For a similar offence against a black a white man is let off with a light penalty.

Infantile mortality among African babies is very much higher than among Europeans, because negroes can't afford doctors' fees.

The South African Police and Prison Service includes a high proportion of uneducated hobbledoys who hate the educated African and give him hell at every opportunity.

But it would be wrong to assume that the average white South African is deliberately cruel to negroes. Often the white employers treat their black employees very well, but are determined to keep them in a position of inferiority.

Modisane mentions an Afrikaner woman who said she and her husband were always lending the black labourers money, but she didn't realise that such loans were a poor substitute for a living wage.

In South Africa and other territories the white missionary was too often an agent of the imperial power. He wanted to save the African's soul but not to make him the white man's equal. That is one reason why so many Africans are drifting away from Christianity with its white angels and black devil.

I was speaking to an educated Afrikaner who told me that his father, a farmer, allowed a negro servant to sleep across the threshold of the front door to guard against intruders. My friend wanted to prove that his father treated his labourers well. "What an honour," I scoffed. "to be promoted to the rôle of watch-dog!"

In South Africa it is a criminal offence for a white to have sexual relations with a black and vice versa. Many Europeans in high positions have been convicted of this offence. In this connection an amusing case occurred in Cape Town. The black girl pleaded guilty and got six months. Her white partner pleaded not guilty and was acquitted.

Whenever I visit South Africa I feel ashamed at the racial discrimination. Europeans like to delude themselves that the non-European is happy and carefree, quite satisfied with *apartheid*, but behind the scenes there smoulders a burning resentment that will erupt one day.

Many serious students of the problem believe that the third world war will be caused by racial discrimination in South Africa.

(Continued on page 191)

THE LUXURY HOUSES OF GOD

Kit Mouat

ON June 17th, 1966, I referred in the FREETHINKER (page 185) to the situation in this country by which Anglicans are taking money out of local rates for the purpose of repairing, restoring and preserving their cathedrals. I pointed out that the Church of England has plenty of money to pay its own bills, but that, not unnaturally, it prefers to use other people's money so long as it can. I also mentioned the particular instance of Chichester. Recently this cathedral received promised donations from both county and local Sussex councils; at the same time it is paying out large sums for especially commissioned works of art and new vestments in an attempt, I suppose, to keep up with the Roman Catholic Joneses. Lewes County Council promised £15,000, and our own urban district council another £1,000, both over a period of five years. It is gratifying that this year's donation from our local council has now been cancelled. The Diocesan House is angry; but, the point has been made; the Church of England has no right whatsoever to rely on non-Anglicans paying its housekeeping bills while it, so to speak, goes out and buys a new hat.

The methods of possible complaint are roughly this:

1. Secular Humanists should find out exactly how much money (if any) is being donated by their local and/or county councils to cathedrals in their area.
2. They should check up to see if this money is being donated to a cathedral which can reasonably be described as being *in the vicinity*, which is a legal definition open to abuse.
3. They should write to their local papers, to their MP, and should generally make public the resentment of non-Anglicans (and especially non-Christians) who are already paying towards the cost of denominational Church schools, for hospital chaplains (out of the NHS) and see no reason why cathedrals should be added to the list, even if they are recognised as "buildings of historic importance".
4. They should make an appointment to see their District Auditors so as to present their complaints reasonably and

calmly before them. The Auditors have the power to cancel such a donation, and even if they are not prepared to do this, they may well recommend that the Council cannot afford to make such a donation in the future.

5. It should be pointed out that there is nothing whatsoever to stop anyone making a voluntary collection for the preservation of cathedrals (some Secularists would be sorry to see them disintegrate completely); it is the *compulsory levy* of public money on behalf of any church for the repairs of buildings, the purpose of which is primarily to spread and preserve the credal faith of this or that Christian sect, that we object to. Many arguments in favour of our paying these bills will be produced; none, in my view, is valid. Cathedrals are *not* just tourist attractions; they cannot be hired by Jews, say, or atheists for their own use; it *is* a religious matter, for if these buildings belonged to, say, the Communists, it is unlikely that there would be any attempt to take our money for their upkeep.

If anyone finds it difficult to summarise the important Secularist case, I will try and help if they will write to me. This is a battle that is worth fighting. The Anglicans are already busy fighting it. The income of their Church Commissioners for 1965/66 was £21,234,827; more than £3 million more than the previous year. Out of this the Commissioners will pay for new churches, church halls and so on; they just prefer to get others to pay for the upkeep of those buildings they already have. The Church of England is also the largest landowner in the country next to the Crown and the Forestry Commission. If any individual behaved (as regards his money) as the Church of England behaves, he would justifiably be considered irresponsible and immoral. We should not judge others by ourselves: Christians are masters at getting other people's money for the propagation of their own creeds by one means or another. So long as we do nothing to stop them, many people would suggest that they deserve to succeed. But if every Secular Humanist takes action, then at least this time perhaps the Anglicans won't have it all their own way.

G. D. Deodhekar

INDIAN ABORTION BILL

A BILL to legalise abortion as a means of Family Planning is to be introduced in the Indian Parliament, very shortly, by the Government. At present, medical abortion is legal if the mother's life is in danger or if conception was the result of a rape.

The present minister for Health and Family Planning is Dr S. Chandrasekhar who is not basically a politician but a distinguished demographer and the most vigorous champion of population planning in India. "Put a full stop after the third child" is his present slogan. At a speech in Bombay on April 29th he announced his intention to introduce the bill legalising abortion for family planning. Other methods such as the IUCD sheaths, the pill, the male operation will still be available. Presumably, voluntary abortion may be resorted to where a couple with two or three children have failed to stop a pregnancy for reasons of ignorance, neglect or accident.

There will hardly be any opposition from the rank and file of Hindu society, I expect. Their natural inclination

will be to take a commonsense view and the absence of an organised priesthood would mean that they would not be influenced by theological hair-splitting. However, the weakness of the Congress party in the Parliament may embolden sections of orthodox Hindus to try to use this issue as a stick to beat the Government with. But the realities of the food and population problems in India are so pressing that I doubt if such opposition will cut much ice. The Roman Catholic Church in India is certain to put up a great deal of opposition. So would other Christian denominations, taking their theological cue from Western Europe. Since the Christian churches claim to be able to decide on ethical issues in universal terms, they would be expected to express varying degrees of opposition to the Indian Bill. However, freethinkers and humanists in Britain ought to extend their support to the measure because even if such a measure may be too drastic or unacceptable in British conditions it does not follow that it is wrong or unethical in Indian conditions, and in fact may be just the step which will meet the desperate situation in India.

NEWS AND NOTES

THE Educational Institute of Scotland has come out against questioning candidates for teaching posts about their religious beliefs. A resolution to this effect was passed at a recent executive meeting in Edinburgh. Attention was drawn to the recent dispute in connection with the questions asked when the Dunbartonshire Education Committee interviewed candidates for the headmastership of the Douglas Academy, Milngavie. A clergyman on the committee had asked candidates if they belonged to a church, and was reported to have said he did not mind which denomination an applicant belonged to, but he would not support the appointment of an atheist.

Commenting on the case, the *Scottish Educational Journal* suggests the clergyman was almost certainly exceeding his rights. The article says: "It is wrong in principle and foolish in practice to use religion as a criterion in the selection of candidates for teaching posts. It is wrong in principle because a person's views on religion are not relevant to his qualifications as a teacher, and a profession of Christian faith is by no means a reliable guide to character, nor is a denial of faith any evidence of the lack of it. It is also foolish in practice to question candidates about their religious convictions because to do so may prejudice

the chances of those who are not professing Christians—but only if they are honest enough to say so".

The Humanist Teachers' Association was one of the bodies which protested against the practice of questioning candidates about their church affiliations, and it must be evident to religious bigots that such abuses will only stir up opinion against them.

Cold feet?

THE National Secular Society's second forum-style meeting takes place in London next Friday evening. The subject will be censorship, and as on the first occasion, the organisers have endeavoured to have a wide range of views presented.

To some extent they have been handicapped by the strange reluctance of those who are always ready to guard the nation against the perils of *Ulysses*, *Last Exit to Brooklyn* or *Till Death Us do Part*, to defend their views and actions in public.

Sir Cyril Black, MP, James Dance, MP, Lady Dartmouth and Mrs Jill Knight, MP, had previous engagements. Mrs Mary Whitehouse gave rather odd reasons for her refusal: she had "already done so on a number of occasions at University and Sixth Form conferences", and also did not wish to be away from home two nights in succession. Perhaps the good lady gets cold feet when she sleeps in a strange bed.

One Church

THE Episcopal bishop of California, Dr Kilmer Myers, has sent a chill blast through the ranks of those Protestants who are worried or completely opposed to jumping on the ecumenical band-waggon. The bishop is quite uncompromising; he wants Protestants to "acknowledge the Pope as leader of one church under God".

Great will be the wrath of the Rev. Ian Paisley and the Protestant Truth Society, but probably Bishop Myers is saying exactly what large numbers of Protestants are thinking. Certainly there are many in the Church of England who see reunion with Rome as a barrier to the advance of unbelief and secularism.

Danilo Dolci

DANILO DOLCI, the social reformer and writer whose battle against Mafia corruption in Sicily has won him an international reputation, has been nominated for the 1967 Nobel Peace Prize. His sponsors include a number of distinguished Britishers.

Garden party

ORGANISERS of outdoor functions in this country must have boundless optimism and nerves of steel. So I hope that FREETHINKER readers will support the annual garden party of the Humanist Housing Association, being held this year at Burnet House, 8 Burgess Hill, London, NW2, on Sunday, July 2nd from 3 p.m. until 5.30 p.m.

Cheers!

IT is reported that a new public house at Thetford is to be named *Rights of Man*. The choice of name is very appropriate; Thetford is Paine's birthplace, and *Rights of Man* one of his best-known works.

E.A.

Just published by the National Secular Society

WHY I AM NOT A CHRISTIAN

BERTRAND RUSSELL

(1/-, plus 4d postage)

Just published by the Fabian Society

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN STATE SCHOOLS

BRIGID BROPHY

(2/6, plus 4d postage)

Both obtainable from

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1

PUBLIC FORUM

CENSORSHIP

Speakers include

JOHN CALDER PETER WATKINS
PETER FRYER JOHN MORTIMER
DAVID TRIBE

The Very Rev. IAN HISLOP, O.P.

FRIDAY, JUNE 23rd, 7.30 p.m.

CAXTON HALL, Caxton Street, London, SW1
(nearest Underground: St James's Park)

Organised by the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS 1967

Jean Straker

IT was a freeing and historic sense of occasion when, to 19 women and 210 men enjoying coffee, liqueurs and the aroma of cigars at the 198th Royal Academy dinner, Violet Bonham Carter (*Lady Asquith*), in her eightieth year and a *vieux-rose* pink satin gown, rose to propose the toast of the Royal Academy of Arts in front of William Roberts' appropriate and symbolic cubistic picture of semi-naked men and women fighters, *Combat* (a Diploma work deposited on his election as an Academician), for it marked 'the end of purdah for this great monastic fellowship'.

"Sometimes accused of hidebound orthodoxy", she said, the Royal Academy "has flung tradition to the winds, confounded all its critics and detractors, by a daring and almost reckless experiment: they have actually invited women out to dinner."

For some years now Members had been pressing for this innovation—a correction which the new president, in his first year of office, Tom Monnington was quickly pleased to introduce. But that was not all, she said, for women were not only to be seen—a rather over-rated treat she always thought—but actually to be heard as well.

"To me how undeservedly has fallen the honour of being the first to break the sound barrier: ah, would that I were more supersonic . . . First, I must confess to being a most unworthy spokesman for my sex. As a feminist, so called, my record is zero-minus."

In the fierce battle for women's rights, long ago, she had been a blackleg without even the decent covering of a blue stocking, uneducated, disenfranchised, wrong—and yet had never even bit one policeman, let alone a cabinet minister.

"Yet, ex-scab, ex-slave, here I am, at journey's end, entrusted with a task I would have chosen above all others . . . To me art is an intimate personal revelation, a transmission of feeling for which we may become what Keats called 'secret sharers' in the artist's own vision and experience."

She would have dearly liked to see, as on a moving screen, a visual record of the Summer Exhibitions of past decades in which the taste of bygone generations is reflected; but taste was a rainbow and no committee could possibly reflect the multitudinous shades of each year's prism. And in this remark she illuminated the problem and the nature of an annual event which is both traditional and heuristic, both representative and unique, both involved and distant—a problem which each year the Royal Academy has to restate in mitigation of the accusations of guilt which juries of critics and detractors make when the Summer Exhibition comes along.

When she was young, and attended her first private view, the hats were of gargantuan size and ugliness, hats covered with feathers, flowers, fruit, dead birds and Dead Sea apples; had she joined the 6,000 guests at this year's private view she would have found that not only were the mini-skirts of the young private viewers already some inches shorter than those worn by the girls in the most recent of the contemporary realistic paintings, but also that the whole tenor of the perception, the craftsmanship, the decor was inevitably, on balance, just that little bit out of time. She put her feelings this way:

"We cannot blink the fact that in every generation however gifted there is a lot of very bad taste—and the fact that it is contemporary, and 'up-to-date', and, so-called, 'highly rated' does not make it one bit better. I devoutly hope that taste will never be assessed by Gallup poll. I think the three words in the English language I hate most are 'being with it'; to their eternal honour the Royal Academy have never been afraid of being 'without it' when 'it' was 'dross and poppycock', however popular."

And yet there was dated dross and poppycock and pop aplenty for the nature of taste is so personal, so individually

variable as to make the range of individual unconditioned sensitivity capable of applying the maximum orientation to almost any subjective term.

What I found at this year's Exhibition was colour galore, craftsmanship in the use of paint, design experimentation, eclectic exercise, pleasure, excitement, control and abandon—all, in fact, that one would expect from the studios of independent schools; what I found little of, for this is the rarest quality of all, was perception—and this, by its very nature, is hardly ever developed in school establishments.

To train artists, to give talent its scope, is just one part of the exercise, and this insufficiency the Royal Academy, in moving into the latter part of the twentieth century, with its first abstract painter president, has sensed and responded to. It has understood that its historic tradition has served its time, has served to create rival schools, rival systems of marketing, rival social and economic pressures, rival cultures. In a world where art is really pop, and paper prints proliferate, and paintings of the month on TV spread fine art like Stork across the land, and all sorts of people make and take pictures, the sense of isolation and authority that two centuries of independence have cultured is tested in a way that has needed £800,000 of capital boost to stay in the race. This is how Tom Monnington put it:

"I do not believe it is the Academy's function to maintain a *status quo*, or to further the acceptance of the acceptable.

There is a tendency of some critics to pass over our Summer Exhibition as 'the mixture as before', and there are some visitors who are disappointed if it is otherwise. Surely in the development in art derived from perception, free from pre-conception, this may be as difficult to appreciate as it is to achieve. We tend to accept the familiar as being true and the unfamiliar as being false."

He looked forward to the 200th Summer Exhibition next year, a prelude to the bi-centenary of the founding of the Royal Academy on December 10th, 1768, which would be commemorated in a number of ways, including the presentation in the autumn of a large and representative Bauhaus Exhibition from Western Germany, showing the influences of the movement, and for which Kandinsky's widow and Paul Klee's son had promised full support; it is hoped that at some future time this event will be followed by a further exhibition concerned with the development of continental art in the last quarter of a century—art is an international language and we are part of Europe—and while English artists have kept abreast of American trends, the Royal Academy would like to give a lead to the better understanding of European art, and this would be timely.

Hoorah for Tom: this is the first freethinking Royal Academician President looking outward, not only to the merits of the rivals, but also to the artistic and cultural influences of other societies.

And to pinpoint, illustrate and analyse this 'perception free from preconception' I select as the Royal Academy painting of the year Carel Weight's *Garden of Eden*.

This work, by the Professor of the School of Painting at the Royal College of Art, is the visualisation of a cry. It enables one to share the secret insight of an artist's affective response to a moment of perception, the flash of human experience which quickens the pulse, steps up the adrenalin, triggers thought into compulsive action. This is no easel exercise, no demonstration of technique or design or decoration, no show of draughtsmanship or expertise. Of his skill in painting Carel has other examples: there are portraits which confirm his accurate eye and his perspective

sense, there are pictures which prove his ability to dramatise in paint not only the innocent emotions but also the sophisticated fantasies of the mind; but none of these skills goes to make up the naïve statement of the drab couple in the waste-patch that is their only Garden of Eden. I think that no greater praise can be given by me of this work than to say that "no untrained infant could have done it better".

I asked Carel to tell me something of its background. He replied:

"I was staying in a village near Huddersfield and one Sunday afternoon I was strolling on its outskirts; I saw a couple of lovers walking through some foliage and I heard the girl cry out. I never knew why she did, but from this my picture evolved.

"I have always been interested in painting biblical scenes in modern settings, but I cannot really say that this picture has any very great religious implications."

He just had to paint that cry; and in doing so he projects English art into a world of tomorrow, for he is liberating the artist from the shackles of tradition and the disciplines of service; it's the sort of picture English painter-poets will be making as the wind of freethought now sweeping across the world blows.

Would the picture have been hung if it were not the work of an Academician? This is a question the other examiners might like to ask themselves. Certainly, I think, it would not have been hung before this year.

Nor, do I think, would David Carr's *The Big Mirror* have been accepted before this year. It is a similar type of picture, a compulsive statement, but more pondered than impetuous; it is a labour of love that defines not an instant vision, but a growing perception of oneself and one's environment.

In this very large canvas, which took 50 hours to paint by a 23-year-old ex-Slade student, now living on National Assistance, one sees through a large mirror the artist and his canvas far away, silhouetted against a window background. Immediately in front of the mirror, and, of course, immediately behind, there are two visions of a nude girl,

lying completely straight, tired, exhausted, dead, certainly to the world, but formally defined in terms of soft, coherent light, which, flowing from the background window, provides a mirror-image *contra-jour* reflection of the figure that reverses the lighting structure of the form in front. This is a scene in depth in which one feels drawn from a first observation of oneself in a mirror to a gradual exploration of the whole of visible space.

I talked to David at the Private View. He said:

"The mirror was in a studio in Albany Street which I was fortunate to be offered. I was excited by the fact that the studio could have been a miniature version of Delacroix's. As soon as I saw it I wanted to paint a very epic self-portrait in the large mirror. Fortunately other ideas arose. I knew that I needed something more to give the picture purpose. I decided, first of all, that a figure would be exciting in reflection, plus the portrait. Then the idea of a nude developed.

"A fellow student from the Slade became my model, and she posed for me throughout the whole of the painting period, an hour or two a day over about two months; I needed her presence to paint any part of the picture, not only her. I am not aware that the study is derivative in any conscious sense from any other work I have seen."

David, who was born in Redcar, had a religious upbringing which still lingers. His nude is well endowed with pubic hair—a quality which would cause many a magistrate and churchman to describe it as 'obscene'. He regards this sort of censorship as ridiculous. He won a University College Scholarship to Greece and Rome; this is the only picture he has submitted to the Academy.

Thus the work of an unknown outsider, awkwardly large, scholastically uncertain, exploratory, amended and potentially obscene is hung and brought to public notice, to give a young artist a chance of recognition that will, without doubt, open up his future career. Would it have been hung at any past Summer Exhibition? I very much doubt it, for this odd, sensitive break-through painting would not have had the recognisable authority of an established master to uphold it.

TOWARDS CIVIL MARRIAGE FOR ALL

Elizabeth Collins

FOLLOWING the decline in Church attendance in this country there appears to be a gradual but significant increase in civil marriage ceremonies. A recent suggestion by the General Purposes Committee of the Association of Municipal Corporations is that in order to simplify the work of Registrars and to remove anomalies, all marriages in England and Wales should be civil events. This need not rule out religious services for those people desiring one, but would relieve Registrars of attendance at churches and other buildings that are unlicensed for weddings. It was also recommended that the residence qualification might be abandoned.

Churchmen, it appears, were divided on this issue, some ministers feeling that the church service was a point of contact, even though the parties concerned belonged to no denomination. The Roman Catholic position was that they would recognise only the religious service as the true marriage. The above suggestions and recommendations were sent to the Registrar-General who is reviewing the law relating to births, marriages, and deaths.

Conversations the present writer has had with Registrars over the past year tend to confirm the increase in civil marriage, one giving the number annually conducted in his area as "some hundreds", another attributed it to the rise in population, and others to the establishment by many

boroughs of more attractive marriage rooms with a certain amount of comfort, modern decor, and a warm friendly atmosphere. Richmond-on-Thames is an outstanding example of this, tastefully carpeted and curtained, with exquisite flower arrangements, the whole radiating happiness. In addition there is an excellent car park.

It is thought that many couples now getting married in church for purely conventional reasons would be quite happy with a civil ceremony under the improving facilities. It costs less, is brief, and it appears that older people prefer it. In anticipatory mood some women's magazines already feature attractive outfits for civil weddings, even to outlining floral arrangements to supplement those provided by the authorities.

When a man and woman agree to live together and found a home and family, the law of the country requires this to be legally registered before witnesses, and provides offices and officials for that purpose. Over the centuries the churches have established as obligatory their own traditions, customs, and rituals, which are now being seriously questioned. Furthermore, for those with no religious allegiance to make use of a church solely as a conventional ceremonial parade is hardly right. It is estimated that many brides still cling to the old superstition that it is lucky to

be married in church! The origin of that idea is not difficult to guess.

In this modern scientific age when women have just celebrated the centenary of their struggle for emancipation and equality—not yet effectively won—how long are they going to tolerate a chattel-status imposed upon them by the priest-invented laws of a primitive organisation? How long will they allow themselves to be “given” into the keeping of a man, even though one chosen by themselves? There lies the indignity. Young people today are not really interested in a ceremony based on a certain “mystical union”, and citing as its authority that merrily celebrated secular marriage feast at Cana which apparently took place in a private house.

In Anglo-Saxon times the bride's hair was cut short like a slave's to show her acceptance of servitude to her husband, and authority of the girl's father was relinquished to the husband for a fee. The groom then used one of the bride's shoes to tap her lightly on the head, symbolising the placing of the master's foot on the neck of the slave.

A form of lay marriage was introduced by the Puritan parliament in 1653, although civil marriage seems to have been in operation in 1618 for in that year Edward Winslow, one of the early pilgrims to New England, was married before a magistrate prior to setting out for America. The 1653 Act required the publication of banns, after which the Registrar gave the couple a certificate to take to a Justice of the Peace who joined their hands and pronounced them man and wife. The Church, however, was still in too strong a position to tolerate that for long and the old religious marriage customs returned.

Should these suggestions of the AM Corporations be approved and passed into law it would be a welcome step towards modernising an out-dated custom as well as breaking down one of the last bastions of clerical control in this country, the others being of course religion in schools, and the BBC. Those in the Humanist and Secular movements will no doubt wish success to the AMC Committee in its efforts to effect this change in the law.

THE FREETHINKER FIGHTING FUND

Sums received from January 1st to March 31st, 1967: W. Turner, 10s.; W. Wilkie, Australia, 7s. 6d.; D. C. Campbell, £3 7s. 6d.; F. W. Harper, 2s. 6d.; K. Graham, 2s. 6d.; J. Davenport, £2; L. Light, £1; W. Armstrong, 12s. 6d.; H. Apling, 12s. 6d.; A. E. Stringer, £3 2s.; A. Byrne, 2s.; H. A. Alexander, 10s. 6d.; W.H.D., 5s.; Mrs D. Parkin, 2s. 6d.; N. Sinnott, 12s. 6d.; D. L. Humphries, Australia, £8; G. S. Brown, 2s. 6d.; A. Faiers, 10s.; O. Grindhahl, £1; C. Knapp, USA, 7s. 6d.; Mrs A. Calderwood, £2; J.W.A., £5; S. Marshall, 11s. 2d.; F. G. Melhuish, £1 8s. 1d.; E. C. Round, 5s.; E. Hughes-Jones, 12s. 6d.; D. V. Montagu, £1 5s. 6d.; N. Henson, £1; A. W. Coleman, £10; D. W. Coleman, £10; W.H.D., 5s.; H. E. Follett, £1; H. Strang, 7s. 6d.; D. Davies, 10s.; J. MacMahon, 2s. 6d.; H. B. Holgate, 1s.; Mr & Mrs Kirk, £2 2s.; R. C. Mason, £3; T. H. Nibloe, 4s.; R. C. Mason, £1 1s.; Dr F. Murphy, £5; D. Taylor, 1s.; Mrs E. Hay, 5s.; P. Kay, £1 1s.; D. Baker, £4; J. T. Bolton, £1 10s.; A. W. Harris, 5s.; W. Crichton, 6s. 6d.; L. B. Brewer, 1s. 6d.; J. Sutherland, 2s. 6d.; S. C. Merrifield, 5s.; F. F. Brown, £1 1s.; Miss J. Pye, 5s.; J. F. Forsyth, £1 5s. 6d.; N. Toon, £1 2s. 6d.; M. Gravy, 5s.; A. Petch, 2s. 6d.; J. G. Burton, 5s. E. F. Channon, 10s.; J. Jackson, 10s.; A. Foster, 11s.; C. Cullen, 11s.; J. W. Robinson, 5s. 6d.; G. R. Bigley, 10s.; W. Scarlett, Snr., 2s. 6d.; Mrs A. E. Crowe, 6s.; P. Kay, £1; Prof. G. Cunelli, 11s.; L. Hanger, 1s.; W. Scarlett, Jnr., £3; F. R. Wise, 10s.; H. A. Alexander, 10s. 6d.; G. Swan, 2s. 6d.; R. G. Morton, £100; R. Atherton, 5s.; Lord Willis, £2 2s. 6d.; A. J. Martin, 5s.; R. B. Ratcliffe, 12s. 6d.; Mrs MacPherson, 10s.; S. A. Josephs, 1s.; Mrs M. A. Watkins, 11s.; L. R. Brewer, 1s.; W.P., 8s. Total to 31st March, 1967: £195 5s. 9d.

THEATRE

David Tribe

'Tis Pity She's a Whore (John Ford), Vanbrugh Theatre Club.
The Trojan Wars (Part Two) (Euripides), Mermaid.

NON-THEATRE-GOERS and the generally barbarian always imagine that sex-n-violence is a neologism of creative minds in their own degenerate age, unknown to their fathers in gentler times. They should see the two works here reviewed, one seventeenth century, the other fifth century BC. In one an incestuous brother murders his sister and flourishes her excised heart at her husband; in the other a son murders his mother's second husband and is then helped by his sister to murder his mother, who is taunted with her husband's decapitated head as she lies dying, whereupon he tries to murder his aunt. Both plays are strewn with other murders and attempted murders. In the context this is dramatic necessity, not cheap sensationalism. John Ford's masterpiece is disturbingly amoral, but many who are attracted by the title to what they think is a naughty Restoration comedy will find strong meat from the grim days of the first Charles, spiced by anti-Vaticanism. Euripides' drama is a moral allegory, redeemed by final reconciliation and salvation. Herein it quite outclasses the Christ myth of a later period and less sophisticated region.

Though students, RADA performers have a well-earned reputation for emotion that only occasionally becomes emotive. In this production they can be very grateful for the inventiveness and full use of an ideal small stage achieved by director Bill Bryden and designer Douglas Heap. The last two of the Trojan tetralogy, *Electra* and *Orestes*, have Wilma Hollingbery and Christopher Guinee in the title rôles. Otherwise the caste is similar to that in the previous duet. Jack Lindsay and Bernard Miles again translate and direct respectively. For all the flaws, the evening is a powerful one.

A FINE EXAMPLE OF MORAL COURAGE

(Continued from page 186)

We blame the African for turning to Communism, but if I were a negro and saw all roads to economic, political and social justice barred, I would become a Communist if such a doctrine held out any hope of emancipation. Under its *Suppression of Communism Act* the South African Government suppresses all liberal tendencies. Negroes can't form trade unions, strike for higher wages or try in any way to alleviate their conditions.

A few years ago I saw photographs of police lashing black strikers in the streets of Cape Town. There had been no violence. The strikers merely stayed at home until chased out by the *sjambok*. One often hears it urged that the South African racial policy must be good because the country is so prosperous, but such an argument is illusory.

One of the most depressing features of the South African imbroglio is the way the Dutch Reformed Churches condone the colour bar. Normally a non-European is not allowed in a white church, except as a cleaner.

When I travelled about the *platteland* of South Africa I found that the more stupid, ignorant and depraved the white was, the more he hated the African. I have read books by negroes that few Europeans could write.

The Afrikaner thinks he was chosen by God to rule South Africa, and the blacks (children of Ham) put there to serve him. So they will fight to the death to preserve their privileges, but a West Indian proverb says "Time longer than rope". The mills of destiny grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small. Great changes are taking place imperceptibly in South Africa, despite the diehards.

FREETHINKERPublished by G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.
(Pioneer Press)

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1

Telephone: HOP 0029

Editor: DAVID COLLIS

THE FREETHINKER ORDER FORM

To: The FREETHINKER, 103 Borough High St., London, SE1
I enclose cheque/PO (made payable to G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.)
£1 17s 6d (12 months); 19s (6 months); 9s 6d (3 months).
(USA and Canada \$5.25 (12 months); \$2.75 (6 months); \$1.40
(3 months)).

Please send me the FREETHINKER starting

NAME

ADDRESS

(BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE: plain paper may be used as order form if you wish.)

The FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent.
Orders for literature from THE FREETHINKER BOOKSHOP; FREETHINKER subscriptions, and all business correspondence should be sent to the BUSINESS MANAGER, G. W. FOOTE & CO. LTD., 103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1, and not to the Editor.

Cheques, etc., should be made payable to G. W. FOOTE & CO. LTD.
Editorial matter should be addressed to: THE EDITOR,
THE FREETHINKER, 103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1.

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 Holidays, Art Holiday, Burton Galleries, Wirral Cheshire, 29th July to 12th August. Small Youth Camp near Yeovil, Somerset. Details of both from Mrs M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal Book Service. For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

OUTDOOR

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

Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.; Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

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

Coventry and Mid-Warwickshire Humanist Group (Tudor House, Spon Street, Coventry), Tuesday, June 20th, 8 p.m.: Annual General Meeting.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, June 18th, 11 a.m.: Dr JOHN LEWIS, "Alienation".

West Ham Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead Green, London, E11), Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.

FILM

David Tribe

Ulysses (Joseph Strick), Academy Cinema One.

JAMES JOYCE straddles a dangerous pinnacle in English literature. Assimilated, his "stream of consciousness" technique has caused fresh springs to flow in his successors. Slavishly followed, he has led many young writers (and himself in *Finnegan's Wake*) to unreadable grief. His childhood in Holy Ireland was twisted by the might of the Catholic Church and uncoiled in the usual way—a spasm of "obscenity" and "blasphemy". From a cursory glance Lady Dartmouth formed the impression his work of genius, *Ulysses*, was anticlerical—an impression confirmed by book-a-month mumsy—which was no remarkable feat of literary detection, as the "elevation" of a shaving bowl appears in the fourth line.

From 1922 to 1966 no film-maker dared touch it. Much of it was "obscure": its poetic meaning was plain enough but a scenario of what was happening to whom that claustrophobic June day and night in Dublin was elusive. Above all, it had a unique record of worldwide bannings, and it hardly seemed possible to remove the provocation and find anything much left. The first obstacle could have been overcome by producing a *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*; the second by having a direct confrontation with the censors. Stiffened by doing Gide's *Balcon*, Joseph Strick decided to attack both problems frontally. Some of the poetry and mystery was thereby lost, but what emerges is sincere, faithful to the more explicit parts of the original text, and a revelation of the beauty of frankness to a wider audience than will ever struggle through the book. It was found it did not provoke heterosexual assaults in the United States (where amazingly the Catholic censorship body formerly known as the Legion of Decency has not opposed it) or homosexual attacks in New Zealand (where it shows to segregated audiences, with ushers alternating with usherettes). Its enlightened acceptance uncut by the Greater London Council, which one hopes will be emulated by boroughs up and down the country despite the British Board of Film Censors' failure to give it a licence, represents a notable victory for cultural freedom.

The film is, it is true, less "shocking" than the book. Some of the starkest of the "Nighttown" images are omitted, the Eastern and Greek sculpture that flashes upon Molly Bloom's now notorious bedroom soliloquy is far from being the most disturbing that could have been selected.

But for the Dartmouths and Whitehouses of this world there is blasphemy and obscenity aplenty.

More importantly, here is some of the cinema's most moving protest against anti-semitism, linked with tolerance of sexual and other lapses in a spouse, straining after dreams that will always escape, love of learning in unlikely places, flying of the human spirit out of the nets set by dogma and prejudice, hatred and pride. To the director and to a dedicated caste (which didn't know whether the film would ever get released for it to be paid), notably Milo O'Shea and Barbara Jefford as the Blooms, Maurice Roëves as Stephen Dedalus and T. P. McKenna as Buck Mulligan, we are all grateful.

Now available

**THE FREETHINKER
BOUND VOLUME 1966**

(Limited Quantity)

PRICE £2 including postage

G. W. FOOTE & Co.,

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1