

**The Humanist World Weekly**Registered at the  
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FOUNDED 1881 by G. W. FOOTE

Friday,  
February 16, 1968**THE FREETHINKER AND ITS READERS****Part Three: The Editorial Policy****1. Supernaturalism**

THE FREETHINKER is a Secular-Humanist paper representing the Secular voice of the Humanist movement. Its principal concern is that the world be rid of the intrusive, obstructive and reactionary teachings and influences of supernaturalism so the way may be eased for a Humanist Open Society. We have a negative and a positive role; to clear and to build. We oppose the teachings and influences of supernaturalism because we see them to be partly false, partly unverifiable and mostly ridiculous; because we see them as sometimes ethically indefensible, sometimes positively cruel and always irrational and regressive.

We uphold the right of every man to express his views whatever they are and however much we may decry them; it is only when action, which may derive from such opinions, harms or interferes with the liberty, dignity, rights, independence and property of any other individual that we are militantly against them. We see this happening as a result of supernaturalist teachings and influences and we reserve the right to criticise and test them.

The FREETHINKER is opposed to certain forces and influences, not to people. Humanism is a concern for the welfare of all men, for priests and prophets no less than Secularists and Humanists. We find that, when we describe individual supernaturalists as foolish, reactionary, bigoted, hypocritical, dishonest or downright corrupt, there are always other supernaturalists who will jump to support our view. We believe the vast majority of supernaturalists are far, far better than the nonsense they uphold; the modern Christian, for instance, is usually a better man than the Holy Fathers appear to have been and his views are clearly superior to the Christianity he has inherited.

**2. Testing**

Our conclusions are subject to revision and we don't wish to reject any information we insufficiently understand. For this reason, we continue to re-examine the evidences for the various supernaturalist beliefs, and we invite all those who hold views opposite to our own, and who feel they have more rational arguments than our own, to produce them in these pages. Theological apologists please note: through these pages you can reach thousands of atheists all willing to give your arguments courteous and impartial consideration. We would be pleased to hear from you.

**3. Censorship**

We don't like censorship but some material has to be rejected or modified. Copy which contains libel, obscenity, detected error or falsity, gross abuse, obscurity, racialism or incitement to violence has to be rejected. Quarrels between sections of the movement are not given expression. Matter which is too lengthy, of poor quality or irrelevant to our concerns is also rejected.

**4. Contributors**

We are endeavouring to increase the number of articles which appear in each issue; this necessitates shorter articles than we are used to seeing in the FREETHINKER. It also necessitates that we have more contributors and a greater diversity of material. Copy not exceeding 600 words will receive the greatest welcome and more speedily find its way into print.

**5. Correspondence**

Readers' letters prove popular and we shall endeavour to give at least one page entirely to such correspondence. Letters should not exceed about 200 words and should be relevant to our content and concerns. Response to articles should be sent immediately after such articles have appeared. No letters sent for publication can be answered; they are either published or they are not. Letters not intended for publication should be clearly marked 'Not for publication' and these we shall endeavour to answer.

**6. Your views**

Your views of this paper and its contents are of great interest and value. They will continue to act as a guide to the shape the paper takes. It is just as important that we learn what you like as what you dislike. If you like some aspect of the paper, let us know, and thereby counteract the forces of disapproval which may cause a change you won't like.

**7. News**

The front page will continue normally to be reserved for news items but this cannot be a constant rule. Rather than pad-out trivial bits of news when there is a scarcity of news relevant to our concerns, we would rather employ the space for other material.



# FREETHINKER

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). 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 and MCRAE.

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

Cambridge Humanists, Mill Lane Lecture Rooms, Cambridge, Friday, February 23, 8.30 p.m.: Dr. C. R. B. JOYCE, "Has man's central nervous system a future?"

Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group, The Lecture Theatre (Room 102), Southgate Technical College, High Street, London, N14, Wednesday, February 21, 7.30 p.m. for 8 p.m.: JACK PARSONS, "The Population Explosion".

Leicester Secular Society, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, February 18, 6.30 p.m.: R. W. MORRELL, "From Genesis to Darwin".

The Progressive League, Weekend Conference at Eastbourne, February 23rd-25th. Subject: "Public Law and Private Morality". Speakers include LENA JEGER, MP, H. A. HAYDON, AVRIL FOX, AMBROSE APPLEBE. Bookings and enquiries: Terry Gabriel, 9 Russell Gardens, London, NW11.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, February 18, 11 a.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, "Anxiety and Belief versus Knowledge"; Tuesday, February 20, 6.45 p.m.: DISCUSSION, "Economics and Technology".

South Place Sunday Concerts, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, February 18, 6.30 p.m.: BARRY TUCKWELL, MARGARET KITCHIN, IONA BROWN. Hindmith, Beethoven, Brahms. Admission 4/-.

Women for Disarmament (in co-operation with the United Nations Association), Strand Palace Hotel, London, WC2, Friday, February 23, 6.30 p.m.: Assemble in Temple Bar; 7 p.m.: DINNER. Tickets (£2) from Mrs F. Bacon, 7a Albert Street, London, NW1.

## GONWAY HALL: THE RIGHT TO DIE

OVER 400 attended the National Secular Society's forum THE RIGHT TO DIE held on Friday, February 1, at London's Conway Hall. The topic for discussion was *Voluntary Euthanasia* and, in particular, the Bill supporting it at present before Parliament. Two speakers were firmly in favour of the Bill and two speakers were just as firmly against it.

Those taking part, in the order in which they addressed the floor, were Baroness Stocks of the Euthanasia Society, Dr Cicely Saunders, Medical Director of St Christopher's Hospice, David Tribe, NSS President, and Norman St John-Stevas, Conservative MP for Chelmsford. The Chairman was Archdeacon Carpenter of Westminster Abbey.

Baroness Stocks held that the patient's life was his own and, to decide when to end his life was, she felt, an elementary part of the rights of the individual.

Dr Saunders, who opposed voluntary euthanasia, thought that with the increasing complexity of medicine which makes it more and more difficult for doctors to see patients as human beings, this was a dangerous time to bring such a Bill into force. But the "main reason why we say 'no' to euthanasia is that, to do otherwise, would be to say 'no' to God." Presumably because it is the antithesis of "Thy Will be done".

Mr Tribe reminded the speakers that it was *voluntary* euthanasia which was being considered; no one was going to unwillingly have their lives taken from them. When a patient says "I don't want to go on", that is his business alone and it doesn't matter what others may think.

Mr St John-Stevas thought compulsory euthanasia was always just behind voluntary euthanasia. He was against death on any ground: abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment or war. The prerogative of life and death was not man's but God's. Could it be a matter of personal choice? No. Society rests on agreement between men to acknowledge certain values; one of these values is 'life'. It is the collective conscience of the community which opposes this campaign for euthanasia.

Very little else seemed to this observer as relevant to the main issues: issues which were greatly obfuscated by the introduction of a shoal of red herrings.

Has an individual, who may be suffering unbearable pain and distress, the right to determine he shall end his life? If he has, have others, willing to assist him, the right to end his life when it is being asked of them, and when the patient is no longer capable of ending his own life?

Many of the dangers pointed to were already guarded against in the Bill being examined. Those committed to certain religious beliefs will obviously have objections, but can there be rational objections on any other grounds? Mr St. John-Stevas' point about the values agreed upon which maintain society was weak in that all such values are subject to change; it was being suggested that life itself, without any regard to its quality, was not adequate as a basic value to be consistently upheld by any society. It was being suggested that the prerogative of life and death was the individual's own; that no one has the right to prevent another individual from determining his own death. It is difficult to see what objections this could meet apart from religious objections.

Perhaps the most warming and heartening aspect of the whole meeting was the charm and impartial courtesy of the Chairman who, with a kindly wit and finesse, seemed to win the hearts of every Secularist and Humanist in the hall.



## THE OPEN SOCIETY

### HAROLD BLACKHAM answers some questions

put by Brian Cooper of the *British Weekly*

Acknowledgements to the Editor of "British Weekly" for kind permission to reprint from an article published on January 18 under the title "Into the Open Society".

#### Brian Cooper: How would you define the 'Open Society'?

**Harold Blackham:** The open society we are coming into today is a consequence of the pluriform society, which itself resulted from the ending of the mediaeval uniform society with the Reformation. The pluriform society had a variety of institutions but a common policy—England from the late seventeenth century, for example—and general ultimate beliefs, whereas the open society is united by common institutions serving common human needs—schools, hospitals, welfare services, etc.—but is not united by common ultimate convictions. There will be a consensus about the working of society, and society's rules will all be for the sake of richer personal life, which is the area open to choice and the pursuit of ideals, but there will be no generally-shared interpretations.

**Cooper:** You have elsewhere summed up the humanist ideal for the Open Society as 'everyone living exactly as he pleases and having a strong sense of public obligation'. Are these compatible?

**Blackham:** I was quoting Pericles on the Athenian ideal! This has always been the ideal of the enlightened democracy. It was Matthew Arnold's ideal, and John Stuart Mill's. It only breaks down if people don't accept their basic moral obligation to keep the rules of co-operation to support a wide degree of personal independence.

**Cooper:** How can you have agreement on basic moral obligations without a wide consensus on ultimate realities?

**Blackham:** Virtue is responding to man's needs in society: mutuality, reciprocity and responsibility. Doing to others as you would like them to do to you—it's a matter of social need. These are among the 'human inevitables', but whether or not these qualities will prevail is an open issue. Human nature is never fixed, but is always open to possibilities.

**Cooper:** If you start from 'community values', you are dealing with the 'what is' of society. How do you make the jump to the 'what ought to be?' Without ultimate convictions, from where come moral imperatives?

**Blackham:** The provisional character of social values does not make them any the less binding. Sociological knowledge, policies of government, and many facets of society are not permanent—but this does not imperil their authority at the time. Society is always open to change, because individually-motivated idealisms are continuously active in society. Awareness of the same equivalent humanity in all, the sense of justice, etc., are basics. In the Open Society, institutions such as churches will provide belief-systems and patterns for living, and though open to erosion by mass pressures in so far as they appeal to what is basic in man they will continue to appeal. A new mass conformity because of pressures from the mass media is a great danger, and because of that all groups that maintain chosen standards, both traditional groups and new ones

such as Humanists, will become more important rather than less—because those who want values will look to them more.

**Cooper:** Will there be sufficient agreement in practice about the basic working of society?

**Blackham:** Schools must be the training-grounds for the Open Society. In a good school, full of all kinds of activities, everyone is active for themselves in a spirit of co-operation, pursuing common tasks and adhering to common standards of excellence, though divided about ultimate beliefs. The Open Society will be like that, and agreement about the basics of co-operation and discussion of moral values, will have to start in the schools. Awareness of responsibility in an Open Society must start there, as moral and behavioural questions relevant to the school community are discussed and settled within that community. This approach certainly is not sufficiently widespread at the moment; adding a period of moral instruction to the curriculum just will not do; it must permeate the whole life of the school. We need to have a serious policy of 'national moral education', and first, parents must be convinced it is necessary. The British Humanist Association is getting under way a campaign to promote this, but it is not something for Humanists alone. Through the Social Morality Council we are working with Christians, Jews and Marxists to map out the serious international problems demanding moral education—peace, population, conservation and human fulfilment—and in 1968 we will have conferences to devise schemes of public education on these issues. This is a practical sequel to face-to-face dialogue—working shoulder-to-shoulder on common human problems.

**Cooper:** Are there any specifically humanist-backed welfare ventures?

**Blackham:** We helped to launch the Swaneng Hill school in Botswana, but that is not a specifically humanist venture. We started a rural reconstruction scheme in Bihar, which is now run by the Indian Radical Rural Humanist Movement, supported by the International Humanist and Ethical Union. In Britain the Agnostics Adoption Society has been started. We have three housing projects in London, and the Edinburgh Humanist group runs a house for homeless youths. We have eighty humanist groups throughout the country, and forty college and university groups, and we are encouraging every group to start some project.

**Cooper:** Humanism has always struck me as rather bleak. Christians have hope derived from the Resurrection and belief in the coming Kingdom of God, and Marxists triumphantly hope for the classless society of tomorrow. Is there a Humanist hope?

**Blackham:** Here is a fundamental difference, for humanists have no sense of inevitable triumph. The undoubted momentum in science and technology is not the same as moral progress. A secular humanist hopes to see a welfare society prevailing throughout the world, but there is no inevitability. Every social advance helps to build up cumulative progress, as man improves his capabilities, learns from experience and improves his human relationships as a consequence of expanding knowledge. Unlike Christians and Marxists, Humanists do not have this vision of what is going to happen but think historically in terms of better and worse possibilities, and are concerned with the climate of action for ever improving the quality of life.



## MR. LOWRY AND THE MYTH OF EVOLUTION

The Rev. Christopher Strother

MR. A. J. Lowry may pour scorn on those who dare to question the Creed of evolution, yet is his pet theory as strong as he seeks to make out? We are told that the anti-evolutionists should cease their criticism as they do not understand evolution. Mr Lowry, as is clear from his FREETHINKER article (January 12), should have thought twice before making this charge as he clearly does not fully understand it himself and, what is worse, does not appear to have really grasped the points made against it.

Despite all he states, only at one point does Mr. Lowry come within miles of any fundamental objection to evolution and this concerns the origin of life. Leaving aside the difficult problem of definitions and limiting life to mean the basic stuff that forms the animal and plant kingdoms, it would be well to point out to Mr Lowry that science has not demonstrated that life came into being by natural means. The experiments postulated an environment that is pure speculation and not based on actual knowledge. Mr Lowry changes an assumption into a fact.

The fossil record gives no support to evolutionary fancies. Families and orders appear suddenly and are not led up to by known, gradual, completely continuous transitional sequences. Indeed, most phyla appear suddenly in the Cambrian with highly complex representatives such as the trilobites. Explanations for this are highly speculative, involving all manner of concepts but, as one leading evolutionary palaeontologist (Dr D. Davis, Curator of Vertebrate Anatomy in the Chicago Museum of Natural History) has admitted, "the facts of palaeontology conform equally well with other interpretations", these he agrees include **creation**.

Industrial melanism is used by Mr Lowry as evidence for evolution at present. However, as research workers admit that dark coloured moths have always existed, his point is invalid. To call the pale coloured moths the "original strain" is to invent something not supported by any evidence; in short, as far as the facts go, there has always been two types of insect and hence there is here no evidence for evolution.

I do not know what Mr Lowry means by a "missing link", I do know, however, that even evolutionists do not place *Zinjanthropus* in their tree of human evolution. Even

Leaky passes him by with his questionable *Homo* (sic) *habilis*. Mr Lowry is very careful to omit the interesting little fact, in common with most evolutionists, that the earliest known fossil men are identical with those living today, hence instead of primitive types at the roots of his wonderful tree of human evolution the astounded evolutionist finds himself in the embarrassing situation of having true men.

Much more detailed information could be given than that offered above but, since the Editor asks for shorter articles, I will conclude simply by stating that as far as the evidence goes a far better case can be made for creation than for evolution. In fact many scientists are beginning to find evolution more of a problem than a help and if Mr Lowry is not careful he may discover his muddle of half-baked and unsupported concepts that go to make up his evolutionary myth sinking without trace underneath him.

*[The Reverend Strother, a regular FREETHINKER reader, obviously thinks the atheist case rather weak, so I have invited him to debate with me through the pages of this paper, providing he will display the same objective, rational and scientific spirit he shows in his argument against evolution.—Ed.]*

## THE FREETHINKER AND ITS READERS

(Continued from front page)

### 8. Circulation

There has been a marked increase in circulation and we shall make every effort to increase this trend. This increase is often due to readers' personal enterprise and we are deeply grateful for such help. If you believe the FREETHINKER does valuable work, increase its effect by contributing to the FREETHINKER FUND and/or helping to enlarge our readership.

### 9. Availability and Cost

The FREETHINKER may be obtained by order from any reputable British newsagent. The newsagent may obtain it through most of the larger wholesalers (W. H. Smith, Wyman, Collet, Menzies, etc.); some newsagents are not aware of this and it is important to point it out to them. By this method it costs only 6d an issue.

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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

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## Pot . Ganja . Weed . Marihuana . Grass Kif . Hashish . Hemp . Cannabis

Some Facts and Opinions from the Ninth Annual Conference of the Student Humanist Federation on Drugs.

Compiled by Don Aitken

THE Proceedings of the SHF's 1968 Annual Conference, held at Nottingham in January, on the subject of 'Drugs' are to be published as a book. This book will be available from the SHF as soon as it is published. Conference felt, however, that a brief outline should also be produced as a leaflet; the following is a digest of the leaflet.

The addresses delivered to the Conference by Francis Huxley, Dr Jerome Liss, Tony Smythe, David Pedley, Professor Francis Camps and Steve Abrams dealt mainly with the issues arising from the use of cannabis and, to a lesser extent, of LSD and other hallucinogens. Other categories of drug, both 'soft' and 'hard', received more cursory consideration.

On cannabis (alias Indian hemp, marihuana, hashish, etc.) Conference, with effective unanimity, felt the following facts to be established as thoroughly as the present somewhat limited state of knowledge permits. All our speakers, and virtually all published authorities agree that:

- (1) In the words of the Brain Report (1961) "Cannabis is not a drug of addiction; it is an intoxicant". That is, cannabis does not produce, in terms of the 1957 WHO definitions, addiction, significant tolerance, physical dependence, or strong psychic dependence. Abrupt withdrawal of the drug produces no ill-effects.
- (2) Cannabis is not a dangerous drug in the sense of causing death or physical damage. No case of either has ever been recorded. The lethal dose is not known with any accuracy (but one authority suggests 1½ lb.!).
- (3) There is no evidence for the existence of a specific 'marijuana psychosis'. No authenticated case of this presumed psychosis has ever been produced. The numerous cases of so-called 'chronic hashish psychosis' found mainly in Egypt, are now thought to be mainly due to the use of hashish adulterated with opium or with datura or both.
- (4) Cannabis is a euphoriant, a sedative. It acts as a deterrent to action and produces a state of heightened suggestibility, as in hypnosis. It does NOT therefore lead to crime, and certainly not to crimes of violence.
- (5) The use of cannabis does not, in any direct sense, "lead to" heroin addiction—or to addiction to anything. The statistical correlation, if any, which may exist between the two must therefore be explained by such factors as the existence of a "drug sub-culture" (a result of the illegality of cannabis).

Thus the superiority of cannabis to cigarettes which cause disease, to alcohol which causes violence and disease, to barbiturates which cause addiction and thousands of deaths, and to amphetamines which cause addition and physical damage, would appear to be established. All these drugs are widely available quite legally, and penalties for their illegal use, if any, are much less than in the case of cannabis.

In view of these facts, Conference had to consider the existence of a law which imposes penalties of up to ten years imprisonment and a fine of £1,000 for possession of

cannabis, and under which several hundred people were sent to prison last year alone.

It was felt that the programme put forward by Soma in their famous advertisement in *The Times* (which Steve Abrams stressed was intended as an absolute minimum programme), involving the treatment of possession as a technical offence with small fines, was basically unsatisfactory, giving scope for victimisation. In the belief that there is no tolerable alternative to legalisation, Conference passed the following resolution:

*"This Conference favours the immediate legalisation of the use of cannabis, subject to appropriate statutory control, broadly similar to that applied to alcohol"*.

Conference rejected, as totally unrealistic, the view that cannabis ought to remain illegal until its harmlessness was 'proved'.

There appear at present to be two avenues open to legal possession and use of cannabis:

- (1) Tincture of cannabis (but not raw cannabis) may be supplied on prescription quite legally. As more doctors realise the possible usefulness of cannabis preparations, in both the psychiatric and general fields (it does cure acne!) this practice may be expected to spread. Cannabis obtained in this way costs less than twenty per cent of black-market prices, and is free of adulterants.
- (2) Although the legal position is slightly obscure, synthetic tetrahydrocannabinols which could now be synthesised on a large scale would appear not to be covered by the Dangerous Drugs schedules. **We would urge that they should not become so.**

Concern was expressed over the Home Office's attitude to scientific research on cannabis; Dr Liss having stated that he knew of several cases in which licences had been refused to *bona fide* research workers. This attitude is largely responsible for the paucity of information on the possible beneficial effects of the drug.

On drugs other than cannabis, Conference passed the following resolution: *"Subject to the previous resolution, Conference expresses its general support of the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report DRUGS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES."*

This report, a valuable and comprehensive document which Conference found most useful, is available, price 5/-, from the National Council for Civil Liberties, 4 Camden High Street, London, NW1.

On LSD, Conference did not feel able to make any positive recommendations, but felt nevertheless that legal sanctions are unlikely to be useful, and that the encouragement of research and education are absolutely necessary.

Considerable disquiet was expressed at the working of the provisions of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1967 designed to institutionalise the treatment of hard drug addicts (financial provision for this—zero), and the government was generally felt to have been less than honest in its pronouncements. Conference did not wish to oppose treatment centres in principle, agreeing with the NCCL on this point.

The following resolution was passed:

*"Conference affirms its support of the view that drug addiction ought to be treated as an illness not as a crime"*.

It was generally felt that the search-without-warrant provision turned this Act from a doubtful Act into a bad one.

For a detailed account of the evidence on which this report is based, see the *Proceedings of the Student Humanist Federation's 1968 Annual Conference*.



## THE "DEAD HORSE"

SINCE the day, nearly fifty years ago, when I read my first FREETHINKER and, shortly after, joined the NSS, I have been told countless times that I am 'flogging a dead horse'.

Am I?

I answer the question with a definite negative.

As long as any vestige of religion remains, I cannot accept that the horse is 'dead'. It is, I agree, rather old and more than a trifle weary, but it is still capable of administering a hefty kick as a warning that it demands respect; the blasphemy laws are still on the Statute Book. Religion is, as ever, a vested interest. It is part of the Establishment, and her Majesty rules by 'Divine Right'.

Despite the flirting of the Established Church with their brethren of Rome, of Non-conformity, or with any other of the multifarious varieties of, as Robert Owen described them, "geographical insanity", I cannot see Canterbury and its brothers (York, Salisbury, Exeter *et al*) handing over their rights and privileges at the Coronation Service to any other branch of orthodoxy or unorthodoxy.

Millions of people still give the 'dead horse' a considerable amount of (financial) support if not respect; the system being what it is, they cannot do otherwise. All of us, Atheists, Agnostics, Secularists, Humanists, Rationalists, Freethinkers—use whatever term you wish (personally I plump for 'Freethinker and Atheist')—however strongly we may oppose it, must nevertheless contribute (probably more than we know) to its continuance, and will go on paying *until we too decide to kick*.

If we all protested, as we ought, against this extraction and, if we all protested, as we ought, against the intrusion of religion into our lives, we may be agreeably surprised at the result. And if parents all withdrew their children from religious 'indoctrination' then the horse would be, if not dead, as near death's door as makes no difference. It would be too weak to raise a leg, let alone kick.

## THINGS HAVE CHANGED

HERE, without comment, are a few extracts from a book presented in 1897, as a Sunday School Prize to a relative of the author. The book is *Queen Victoria and Her People* by the Rev. C. S. Dawe, BA, and published by The Educational Supply Association Ltd., London.

### 'Troubles' in Ireland

"Notwithstanding the generous efforts made by the British Government and people to help the Irish in their dire distress, acts of violence and outrage were sadly common. The fact is, when people are starving they become wild and reckless, and when ignorant as well as starving, they lose all self-control and act regardless of reason. At one time throughout the towns of the south and west, the poor famine-stricken people were seized with the desire of smashing the windows of the better houses. Women and girls, especially, seemed to be attacked with this form of madness. There was, however, some sense in their madness. As the workhouses were overflowing, they hoped in this way to be sent to prison, where they would at least receive some sort of food and shelter."

W. Collins, *Vice-President, NSS*

Two events occurred during 1967 which show all too clearly how strong the hold of superstition still is on far too many people. Early in the year came the Torrey Canyon disaster when beaches around Cornwall and Devon were fouled with tons of oil. Now we all know that tides come in and tides go out with unfailling regularity, and those who live close to the sea know this better than most. Yet in the streets of Plymouth people prayed beseeching the Lord to prevent the oil touching their beaches. Presumably they would not have prayed unless they thought their prayers would be heard and that there was a good chance of them being answered. What did they want God to do for them? Stop the tide, or control it so as to deposit the oil on other resort's beaches? "Eternal Father, strong to save, whose arm hath bound the restless wave" they have thundered vociferously for years. Now was His chance. But He let them down.

The other incident followed some months later. Heavy rains had caused floods in the Lake District and in one village thirty-seven houses were washed away—fortunately without loss of life. Those who were affected congregated in the village church (still secure!) and thanked the Almighty for leaving them their lives.

These people, and those who prayed in the streets of Plymouth, are not one whit removed from the cavemen who saw spirit in everything and who believed that by magical incantations they could control the natural forces. Like those, a little later, who believed that God could, if He would, do the necessary magic on their behalf. The pity is that He so seldom did.

"There was an old women of Sydney  
Who suffered from floating kidney,  
She prayed to the Lord  
To send her a cure  
And He could, if He would,  
But He didna."

Douglas Bramwell

### Attempts on the Queen's life

"To put a stop to these crazy attempts on the Queen's life a bill was passed making such offences punishable by transportation or imprisonment for a term of years, the culprit to be publicly or privately whipped, in such manner and form as the court should direct, and if the court pleased as often as three times. It was rightly judged that the fear of this degrading punishment would be the best remedy for the vanity which courted notoriety."

### And the greatest contrast?

"... story we have tried to tell, but we have miserably failed in our attempt, unless that story kindles the imagination and helps each reader to realise the greatness of the empire to which he belongs; unless it makes him proud to call himself an Englishman and inspires him with the desire and determination to do his duty to his Queen and country; unless it impresses him with feelings of loving loyalty and admiration for our Sovereign and raises his heart in gratitude to God for the blessings He has showered upon this favoured land of ours."



**'The pistol proved to be unloaded'**

"... an Irish lad named Arthur O'Connor adopted a strange way of petitioning Her Majesty for the release of the Fenian prisoners. As the Queen was passing in her carriage, the lad rushed forward, holding a pistol in his right hand and a paper in his left. He was speedily seized, and the pistol proved to be unloaded. The misguided youth, who was seventeen years of age, was sentenced to a year's imprisonment with hard labour and a flogging."

**War with the Ashantees—the capture of Coomassie**

"This was followed by the advance of the whole army, who entered the capital without further resistance."

"The palace was ransacked and stripped of its gold ornaments, but King Koffee was nowhere to be found. The great State umbrella, the emblem of kingly authority, was taken and sent home to the Queen. Having destroyed the palace and set fire to the town, the General gave the word for the homeward march."

**After the Zulu war**

"The Zulu king was afterwards allowed to come to England, where he was received with good-natured respect. He had even the honour of paying a visit to Her Majesty at Osbourne. In spite of his clumsy appearance, caused by his enormous bulk and unaccustomed attire (for he was dressed as a European), he behaved with some dignity, and endeavoured to express his loyalty to the Queen, whom he regarded as his suzerain."

**AN APPEAL**

David Tribe

FOR MY FORTHCOMING BIOGRAPHY of **Charles Bradlaugh**, I should be most grateful for the loan of any letters or other unpublished material to, from or about him, and any journals, minute books and similar records of the English republican movement.

Naturally, if anyone felt disposed to donate such mementoes to the National Secular Society we would be most grateful. Our HQ is Bradlaugh House and through the generosity of Mr Basil Bradlaugh Bonner, Charles Bradlaugh's great-grandson, we now have a valuable nucleus for a permanent exhibition in his honour. As public interest grows in the great Victorian reformers, the preservation of such material becomes more than a labour of love but a national duty. We already have one or two items associated with other NSS presidents and other leading figures in the movement, and we feel that they too should not be forgotten by posterity. Any MSS or other personal material will be received most gratefully.

Past vicissitudes like the inability to store material in cramped rented rooms, the selling up of personal libraries without the Society's knowledge, and extensive damage to our HQ during the second world war, mean that the NSS library is nothing like as good as it ought to be. We should certainly like to have at least a complete selection of books published with one or other of the secularist imprints (NSS, Freethought Publishing Company, Forder, Standring, Bonner, Foote, Pioneer Press, etc.) or by the leaders of the movement. We have of course some of this material but there are big gaps. Let me mention one book—not a particularly good one, but frequently quoted in monographs on secularism and apparently unobtainable in other British libraries—the American Haldeman-Julius edition of

McGee's *History of the British Secular Movement* (1948). There must be many unwanted copies in the country, and we should be happy to add to our stockpile of one. We now have, I believe, complete sets of the *National Reformer*, *Reformer*, *NSS Almanac* and *Our Corner*, most of the FREETHINKER and a sprinkling of other secularist journals. But by some mischance we are missing bound volumes of the FREETHINKER for 1893, 1898 and 1902, also issues 30 and 31 of 1882. There are a number of Paineite, Owenite and Chartist journals, magazines of other societies in the broad freethought-humanist movement, and the short-lived journal of the World Union of Freethinkers, *Etiolo Rationaliste*, that are of interest to us. But let me list only those journals most closely associated with secularism (omitting *The* in title and sub-titles): *Oracle of Reason*, *Reasoner*, *Reasoner* (Leicester), *Cause of the People*, *Investigator*, *Counsellor*, *Propagandist*, *Secularist*, *Secular Review*, *Secular Review and Secularist*, *Secular World*, *Secular Chronicle*, *Republican Chronicle*, *British Secular Almanac*, *Liberal*, *Republican*, *Present Day*, *Progress*, *Agnostics Journal*, *Agnostic Annual*, *Agnostic*, *Watt's Literary Guide*, *Radical*, *Truth Seeker* (Bradford), *Pioneer*, *Birth Control*, *Secular Education Chronicle*. Most of the above publications disappeared in the nineteenth century, sometimes precipitately; a couple have carried on until today under other names and with an RPA imprint (*Question*, *Humanist*).

I mentioned Bradlaugh House above. Ever since Bradlaugh's death it has been the hope of the NSS and sympathisers to build a Bradlaugh Memorial Hall. As a subscription fund failed dismally in this purpose in the 1890s when powerful Liberals were around to support it, and by its collapse caused much disappointment and bitterness, I do not propose to launch a new one now. But in case this appeal should fall into the hands of a wealthy well-wisher, let me say that there is no project more worthy of your support. In addition to Bradlaugh House and its great work of freethought-humanist publishing and campaigning, we need a powerful centre for meetings, cultural and social events, and pilot social welfare projects. We do not lack ideas. It's the money that's short.

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## Letters to the Editor

### Who will Write a Better Bible?

PROGRESS in the arts and sciences periodically demands a better textbook in each field of learning. College professors compete with each other in the textbook-writing profession. Consequently students have access to the most up-to-date information and techniques that science can provide.

The one art (or profession) that uses a text 1800 years old is that of theology (or clericalism). Its one textbook, the Bible, has been found most profitable in gulling the public. This is because it is falsely taught as "the divinely-inspired Word of God", and many people are naive enough to believe it.

But some Christian denomination leaders, who wisely question Bible infallibility, have now developed new creeds. They may be introducing a new age of Christian rationalism, morality, and commonsense. However, Fundamentalist preachers are still clinging to the literal Bible. They seem unwilling or unable to learn, and they refuse to change their false and out-of-date teachings.

It is time for some honest and capable professor of ethics, rationalism, and decent human behaviour to write a superior textbook on morality and theology. It should replace the Jewish "Holy Scriptures" and the Christian "Holy Bible". A better moral guide for mankind is sorely needed.

The Scriptures may have been a satisfactory text for guiding and controlling an ignorant and superstitious first-century Asiatic and Semitic population (Palestine is in Asia). They are no longer satisfactory for 20th-century Caucasians.

It is as necessary to stop teaching Bible superstition and phony faith-healing as it once was to stop teaching that the sun revolved around a flat earth.

Science knows no Heaven, Purgatory, Hell, or any faith-healing through prayer. Why continue the humbuggery and hypocrisy of teaching such superstitious nonsense as fact? A good moral textbook will teach that this life is the only one we'll know, and that consequently we should make it a good one. Who will write a better Bible?

WILLARD E. EDWARDS (USA).

### Bull-er-manure!

IN John D. Stewart's pro-bullfighting letter (January 26) he refers to 'lies' about bullfighting. Two points arise: (1) The term 'bull-fight' is a lie. The bull is not fought. It is worn down and butchered. See Hemmingway's *Death in the Afternoon* in this connection; (2) it was Bernard Shaw who said somewhere that people who commit the greater offence of abusing and exploiting animals will not hesitate to commit the lesser offence of lying about it.

Mr Stewart is to be congratulated, however, on not giving us the usual bull\*\*\*\* about bulls and ballet. W. E. NICHOLSON.

### Nationalism

I WAS surprised and amazed at Willard E. Edwards' assertion, in his article of January 26, that Nationalism is to be preferred to Internationalism. This is quite wrong; we must be citizens of the world; as concerned with the injustices and wrongs in other nations as with those in our own. It is Nationalism which causes war. Wasn't it Bernard Shaw who said that until we get rid of Patriotism we shall always have wars?

Narrow Nationalism leads to racialism and other similar evil things. We must make the United Nations more powerful, and all questions between nations should be submitted to them.

LILIAN MIDDLETON.

[Bernard Shaw is proving helpful this week.—Ed.]

### Internationalism

WILLARD E. EDWARDS says in the January 26 issue (in his second article *The Origin and End of Life on Earth*) that "a sensible world-wide morality . . . and the making of honesty an international virtue are required. Until these aims have been attained Nationalism is far more practicable and sane than . . . World Government".

The answer is that as long as you have Nationalism you won't have "honesty as an international virtue".

Nationalism causes dishonesty. It makes nations lie about other nations, to stir up their people to oppose other nations and fight for their own. It makes nations grab strategic points (like the

Middle East or Vietnam): it makes nations intrigue against other nations and if necessary attack them.

Mr Edwards admits this in another part of his article. He says "Nations seem to fear that nations may gain armed-strength superiority, economic advantage, and political or religious domination. . . . This results in an arms race, government propaganda, etc. etc."

"The future of civilisation is in the hands of scientists, statesmen, economists and educators" says Mr Edwards. A fat chance they'll have to do any good while the diplomatic military Establishment fostered in every country by Nationalism is on top of them!

"They (the educators, etc.) must have freedom from . . . political dictatorship" says Mr Edwards. Nationalism is one of the greatest causes of dictatorship there is: because a dictatorship is necessary to wage wars and prepare for them. Hitler believed in dictatorship because he was a Nationalist as Konrad Heiden makes clear in his book *One Man against Europe*.

There used to be a saying "All great nations behave like gangsters and all small nations behave like prostitutes". And this is true—except that some small nations get in a lot of gangsterism as well!

I. S. LOW.

### The Idolatry of Nationalism

I HAVE known Dr Willard E. Edwards for some time as the advocate of a Perpetual Calendar for the world and I have naturally assumed that, in keeping with this kind of interest, Dr Edwards would be prepared to regard the rest of the human race as his fellows on this planet.

Not so! In his article *The Origin and End of Life on Earth* (January 26) he says: ". . . Nationalism is far more practical and sane than Internationalism or World Government".

I am dumbfounded, since support for American Nationalism (in Dr Edward's case) has ended in one of the strangest international wars the world has ever seen. I refer to the war in Vietnam. An American writer, Sonya Bierstedt, recently had a letter in the *American Farm News* in which she described the American participation in the war in Vietnam as an example of a "Christian Crusade" and the part played by Cardinal Spellman indicates that *Roman Catholic* influence should not be taken lightly.

Now I have no suspicions of Dr Edwards being anything but a resolute Freethinker and opponent of established religions of all kinds. After all, he once wrote: "I think prayer is like speaking into a telephone—with nobody at the other end!" But I would like to suggest that his support for American nationalism is evidence of his acceptance of idolatry of another kind—the Idolatry of Nationalism!

I would like to challenge Dr Edwards to say whether he supports the war in Vietnam and, if so, how he justifies this support as a *human being*. E. G. MACFARLANE, Editor, *World Forum*.

## REVIEW

Jean Straker

**The Conflict of Ideas.** George Foss Westcott, MA (Cantab.). 36 pp. crown quarto, limp cover. Academy of Visual Arts, 8/- (\$1.00).

WRITTEN twenty-five years ago, this essay, revolutionary and heretical at the time, was too challenging for publication then. In the freer climate of the late sixties it still has much to add to an understanding of the uncertainties which the new freedoms have induced into the social conscience.

The author, a scientist 'blacksheep' from an ecclesiastical family, has sought to relate the unchangeability of human nature to the rapid changes which overtake societies and to foresee ways in which the mental and physical control systems of man, the separate arts and sciences, may coalesce to become a unified system covering the whole of human experience.

There are five chapters which analyse and trace the evolution of basic ideology from biological origins, through the development of thought, relatively and objectively, to the present ideological position.

In looking towards the future he foresees a state in which all knowledge will be made instantly available to all.

This modest, but broad, analysis of the 'non-scientific' fields of human subjectivity by a dedicated scientific observer provides the researcher in human studies with a range of thought-provoking concepts which help to bridge the communications difficulties which now exist between isolated disciplines.